Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/sermonsforsunday0000revt

SERMONS

FOR

THE SUNDAYS AND SOME FESTIVALS OF THE YEAR

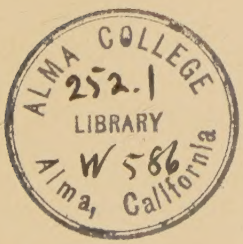
BY THE

REV. THOMAS WHITE

SELECTED AND ARRANGED FROM HIS MSS.

BY THE

REV. JOHN LINGARD, D.D.



NEW YORK
JOSEPH F. WAGNER

18057

Nihil Obstat
REMIGIUS LAFORT, S.T.L.
Censor Librorum

Imprimatur
✠ JOHN M. FARLEY, D.D.
Archbishop of New York

New York, September 17, 1909

Copyright, 1911, by Joseph F. Wagner, New York

THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, U. S. A.

CONTENTS

PAGE

First Sunday in Advent. — On the day of Judgment 1
Second Sunday in Advent. — On the example of St. John the Baptist 8
Third Sunday in Advent. — On the necessity of ascertaining our Predominant Passion 13
Fourth Sunday in Advent. — On the preaching of St. John the Baptist 18
Christmas Day. — On the lessons to be drawn from the birth of Christ 24
Sunday within the Octave of Christmas Day. — On the uncertainty and value of Time 30
Feast of the Circumcision. — On the Circumcision of the Heart 37
First Sunday after the Epiphany. — On the engagements contracted in Baptism . 43
Second Sunday after the Epiphany. — The manifestation of the glory of Jesus Christ, as evinced by the miracle at Cana, in Galilee 50
Third Sunday after the Epiphany. — On the duty of Good Example 57
Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany. — On afflictions 62
Septuagesima Sunday. — The importance of Salvation 69
Sexagesima Sunday. — On hearing the Word of God 74
Quinquagesima Sunday. — On Death 81
First Sunday in Lent. — On Repentance 88
Second Sunday in Lent. — On raising our hearts to God 94
Third Sunday in Lent. — On Confession 101
Fourth Sunday in Lent. — On Contrition 107
Passion Sunday. — On Communion 114
Easter Sunday. — On the Resurrection of Jesus 120
Low Sunday. — On the character of a true Conversion 127
Second Sunday after Easter. — On the duties of the Good Shepherd 135
Third Sunday after Easter. — On disengaging our affections from the World . . 141
Fourth Sunday after Easter. — On the opposition of the World to the maxims of the Gospel 149
Fifth Sunday after Easter. — On the necessity of Prayer 157
For the Feast of the Ascension 164
Sunday within the Octave of the Ascension. — On fervor in the Divine Service . 173
For the Festival of Pentecost. — On the descent of the Holy Ghost 181
Trinity Sunday. — On Divine Revelation 187
Second Sunday after Pentecost. — On the futility of the excuses alleged for absence from Communion 194

PAGE

Third Sunday after Pentecost. — On the mercy of Jesus towards Sinners . . . 201
Fourth Sunday after Pentecost. — On corresponding with Divine Grace . . . 20
Fifth Sunday after Pentecost. — On the vice of Swearing 214
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost. — On the obligations incumbent on Christians . . 220
Seventh Sunday after Pentecost. — On the marks of a true Conversion 225
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost. — On the benefits to be derived from a frequent meditation on Death 232
Ninth Sunday after Pentecost. — On impenitence and hardness of Heart . . . 238
Tenth Sunday after Pentecost. — On the punishment awaiting obstinacy in Sin . 244
Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost. — On Spiritual Deafness 250
Twelfth Sunday after Pentecost. — On the duty of the love of God 258
Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost. — On the Duty of Gratitude 265
Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost. — On serving God with love and affection . 272
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost. — On preparation for Death 278
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost. — On the vice of Avarice 284
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost. — On the love of God 291
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost. — On rash Judgment 297
Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost. — On the torments of Hell 302
Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost. — On the effects of Scandal 308
Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost. — On the means of conforming to our Baptismal Engagements 316
Festival of All Saints. — On imitating the example of the Saints 322
Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost. — On the vice of Hypocrisy 327
Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost. — On sudden Death 335
Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecost. — On indifference in the affair of Salvation 342

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT

ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT

"Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with great power and majesty."—Luke xxi, 27.

SYNOPSIS.—Picture of the day of judgment. Its antecedent and concomitant circumstances. The coming of the Judge. The judgment. The wisdom of God, His omniscience will manifest all sins, even the most secret. Our foolish excuses will then be rejected. The sentence irrevocable, just, without mercy. The punishment. Depart, etc. Now is the time to prepare for that day.

Such are the signs and prodigies that shall precede the day of the Lord. Previously to this event "nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom"; false prophets shall arise, and by their doctrines pervert even the most zealous defenders of the Gospel; exhausted nature shall behold her children languid with affright "and withering with expectation of what shall come upon the whole world." Then shall the sun be covered with darkness, the moon stained with blood, the stars fall from the firmament, and the earth shaken to its lowest foundations: then shall there "be distress of nations, by reason of the roaring of the sea" breaking down its boundaries: then the elements shall be in confusion; "the powers of heaven be moved; and then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud, with great power and majesty." From the highest heaven and from the throne of God shall be despatched the delegate of the Most High; the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall arise. Great God! what a spectacle will then be exhibited to our view! The earth shall cast out the bodies of the dead of all ages, hell shall vomit forth the souls of the guilty, heaven for a time surrender the spirits of the just. The kindred bones shall again be joined, the parted members shall be united, and flesh shall once more form a receptacle which the souls shall again animate. Behold, the Lord appears! millions of angels prepare the way; millions surround Him! Borne upon a cloud, as on a triumphal car, He is invested with light and glory. But, my friends, the description of this awful day, when the whole race of man shall be assembled before the sovereign Judge, defies the power of language; the utmost effort

of the imagination is insufficient to embrace the important reality! But feeble as must be every attempt to paint the terrors of this tremendous hour, the meditation upon what shall then certainly take place has drawn many from the filth of sin to sincere repentance. It would be advantageous to us, my brethren, to bring this day of wrath more frequently to our minds. Uncertain whether we be deserving of love or hatred, a dark cloud forbidding us to penetrate into futurity, what can tend more powerfully to preserve us from sin and animate us to virtue than the frequent consideration of that day on which depends our everlasting rest or never-ceasing misery? I shall this day offer to you two reflections, which, if they are suffered to make impression, are calculated to produce a fear and love of God. At the last accounting day all the crimes of the sinner shall be revealed—at that day all his offenses shall be condemned to a severe but merited punishment.

Though all the attributes of the Deity are infinite, yet His unerring wisdom and immovable justice inspire us with particular awe. By the light of His supreme wisdom all things are manifested to Him; His eye penetrates into every secret place, and at the last day the sovereign Judge will display, in the sight of the whole assembled world, all the abominations of sinful mortals. Here on earth men can form only an imperfect judgment of offenses perpetrated against God; nor can they ever exactly proportionate the punishment to the offense; and, therefore, is human justice often under the necessity of sentencing to the same punishment crimes very different in their degrees of enormity. Neither does human justice extend to all manner of guilt. The thought of malice, the secret resolution of revenge, the dark design and guilty desire rest secure within the shelter of the human breast, defying all the researches of men; but the justice of God will reach every hidden motion of the heart, for His wisdom penetrates the inmost recess of the soul. Nothing shall escape His justice, as nothing can escape His cognizance. A ray of celestial light darted from the countenance of the Son of God shall beam on the naked soul of every sinner. Every veil shall be withdrawn, every folding laid open, and the effulgence of the Deity shall expose to perfect view every transgression. "The heavens shall reveal his iniquity, and the earth shall rise up against him. The offspring of his house shall be exposed, he shall be pulled down in the day of God's wrath" (Job xx, 27). Let us transport ourselves in spirit to this august tribunal, before which shall be

assembled all nations and tribes of the earth: let us represent to our minds the long catalogue of all our sins, from the days of our childhood to the present hour, all laid open to the examination of the collected world, and of each individual. Then shall that take place which would now so much alarm you. Were the sins of each person here assembled made known to his neighbor, how would you be disconcerted? Then would the innocent victim of your hypocrisy perceive that the seeming regard and friendship with which you accosted him, while you wished to draw from him the secrets of his heart, or were solicitous to gain him over as an auxiliary in defaming, vilifying, ruining your neighbor's sacred property, I mean his fair fame and reputation, were no more than deceitful professions prepared to ensnare him; that perhaps, with all the show of affection, you hated or envied him, and having parted company, you had hastened to another, it might be even his bosom friend, and there abused the confidence he had placed in you, stabbed his character in turn, and delighted in the cruel deed. All your treachery, your malice, your envy; all your slanders, detractions, wilful misrepresentations and misinterpretations; all your pride and ambition, which have made you studious to appear under favorable but false colors, while you endeavored, by every art, to blacken your unsuspecting neighbor; all your covetousness, forgetfulness of the poor, your excesses, your impurities, your profaneness; every thought, word and deed will be disclosed at the last day, not to this assembly only, but to the whole world; to prince and subject, to priest and people. Oh! how shall we stand this piercing light of God's knowledge? How will the unrepenting sinner bear the confusion of this disclosure?

Were only those sins collectively exhibited which have been committed in the blaze of noon, and in the public view of the world, what a mass of hideous and terrific deformity would be displayed, but what a spectacle will be presented to our eyes when every latent act of intemperance and dark malice, when many a horrid murder, unknown to the research of earthly justice, and the base perpetrator of the deed shall be held up to shame; when every criminal action, every profane and irreligious word, every thought of fraud, of envy, of malice, every shameful desire, every secret defilement, will be brought to light, and be seen in genuine deformity! When, among the rest, our guilt shall be manifested to the whole world, what will be our confusion and terror? How many sins will occur to us, on

a moment's reflection, which we would not have discovered to a husband, a parent, a friend, for any consideration whatever? Were our consciences to be laid open merely to this small assembly, what blushes would overspread our countenances, what agony torture our souls? The little jealousies which we have entertained, the thoughts of envy at another's qualifications, mental or personal, would be discovered to those who had been the subject of them; the slanders, detractions, calumnies, which we have uttered against our neighbor, the pride, the vanity, the ostentation, which we have indulged, being exposed to the view even of those whose opinion we now affect to despise would overwhelm us with shame and sorrow. Familiarized to the thought of your sins, now while they are concealed within the secrecy of your own breasts, they make a slight impression, but they will then fill sinners with grief and dismay, "and they shall begin to say to the mountains . fall upon us, and to the hills, cover us" (Luke xxiii, 30).

All the details and consequences of each sin, all the varying and aggravating circumstances which in the sacred tribunal of penance have been concealed, distorted, disguised, shall then be represented in their true form and color. You now persuade yourselves that such an action, for which you feel a secret inclination, or which you do not find yourselves ready to forsake, or which you can not prevail on yourselves to mention with intelligible accuracy in confession, is not sinful; or at least is of so trivial a nature that you may approach to the feet of Jesus and obtain forgiveness of other sins while a reserve is made for this: but you will, at the great accounting day in this general confession of every offense, discover the fallacy which you have employed to deceive yourselves. The mystery of iniquity shall be then unfolded, and every pretext and subterfuge be dispelled; the most hidden sins which had been perpetrated in deepest solitude, secure from the inspection of every mortal eye, the enormities which the dark mantle of the night had wrapt in closest secrecy, which had scarcely been intrusted with fearful confidence to your own hearts, shall then be seen exposed in the full blaze of the divine splendor. O God, thy eye penetrates the secrets of every heart, nothing is concealed from thee! "Whither shall I go from thy spirit; or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if I descend into hell, thou art there . . . and I said: perhaps darkness shall cover me; but night shall be my light in my pleasures. Darkness shall not be dark

to thee, and night shall be light as the day: the darkness of the one and the light of the other are alike to thee" (Ps. cxxxviii, 7). "Neither is there any creature invisible in his sight; but all things are naked and open to his eyes" (Heb. iv, 13).

Then shall be brought to light the neglect of so many things designed for your salvation, the pretexts that have been employed in excuse for negligence in assisting at Mass, approaching to the holy Sacraments, receiving necessary instructions, applying to mental prayer, bestowing suitable alms, will all be exposed as frivolous and nugatory. Then will the contrast be evident between the alleged difficulty of performing works of piety and the surprising alacrity displayed on every occasion when amusement, interest, dissipating pleasures, or unprofitable employments invited. To-day the slightest symptoms of indisposition, a clouded atmosphere, a trifling disappointment, are found sufficient excuses to justify your absence from the temple of God, and the great propitiatory sacrifice—when lo! on the succeeding day the card invites to fashionable amusements, vain pleasures, and even sometimes dangerous associations, and neither increased indisposition, nor the state of the atmosphere, nor any obstacles, are regarded. The sudden transitions from heat to cold, the nightly dews, and wintry showers are braved without one alarming fear in the pursuit of pleasure, vanity, or interest. I know that each one persuades himself that this is not his case; but I contend that thousands will then discover, to their cost, that they have sacrificed their devotions, their duty, their salvation, to idle and criminal enjoyments. Often here below the exterior of virtue covers a heart black with guilt; how many whose delight is slander and detraction, are ever boasting their sensibility and charitable feeling? How many, of either sex, affecting the utmost external reserve, are corrupted in their hearts? or in their whole deportment are influenced by pride, or other vices, odious in His sight who knows and sees all things? But then shall the artificial veil be lifted up, the vizor torn away from the face of hypocrisy; and rage, and despair, and consternation, be the portion of the sinner forever. The light of God's countenance having disclosed every hidden secret, His justice will pronounce an irrevocable sentence upon His guilty creatures. He is a God of purity, and can not endure iniquity. That Face which is the delight of the just, which so many have desired to behold, that Face which shall afford joy to the blessed for all eternity, shall dart terror and confusion

upon the wicked. "The adversaries of the Lord shall fear him, and upon them shall he thunder in the heavens; the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth" (I Kings ii, 10); "and he will sharpen his severe wrath for a spear, and the whole world shall fight with him against the unwise" (Wisdom v, 21). No longer figure to yourselves the sovereign Judge under the endearing forms by which He has chosen to represent His present mercy; no longer consider Him as a tender father receiving the prodigal son into His arms and pressing him to His bosom; no longer view Him as the loving spouse of your souls, inviting you to His chaste embraces; as the shepherd seeking the strayed sheep; as the lamb slain from the beginning, the Lamb of God who taketh away the sins of the world. No, sinners, the hour of mercy is gone by, and you have despised it; justice, inexorable justice, is the attribute that shall be displayed in its fullest extent, and in it shall the glory and majesty of that God be magnified whose forbearance is now treated as imbecility. Then shall He come forth as "a lion prepared for the prey" (Ps. xvi, 12). The wicked shall fall before Him, and forever feel the dread severity of His vengeance; then shall be displayed the "sign of the Son of Man" (Matt. xxiv, 30). The Cross shall be borne before the Lord, the instrument of our redemption, the proof of His ineffable humility, patience, and love, of man's guilt and baseness. Then shall our blessed Saviour expose His sacred wounds, those fountains of mercy which will then cease to plead in our behalf, and convict us of foul ingratitude and contempt of His goodness. He will then stretch forth His almighty arm, and the weight of His fury will fall upon sinners; every crime shall receive its merited punishment in proportion to its turpitude; every action, every word, and every thought shall be weighed in the balance of divine justice. "I say unto you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account of it in the day of judgment" (Matt. xii, 36). Oh, what consternation and dismay will oppress the guilty when Jesus Christ shall arise to pronounce the last, the irrevocable sentence! what deathlike silence shall prevail through the inconceivable multitudes of assembled nations, and tribes, and people who have ever drawn breath on the face of the earth. But who shall describe the horrid sensations, the already commenced tortures of eternity, that will overpower the wicked, when the irreversible sentence has been fulminated against them! Then shall he say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and

his angels" (Matt. xxv, 41). Oh, dreadful sentence! Oh, bitter separation! "Depart from me"; far from the joys of my kingdom, from every comfort, into the darksome dungeons of hell, the bottomless pit, where torments everlasting shall be your portion. "Go, ye cursed," etc.

Oh, my brethren, shall we who now have it in our power to shun this endless calamity, through mere indolence, or, what is worse, through downright malice of heart, bring it upon ourselves! yes, it is by the wilful malignity of the sinner that he loses the eternal enjoyment of all good, and is involved in endless misery. "According to thy hardness and impenitent heart," says St. Paul, "thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath and of the revelation of the just judgment of God" (Rom. ii, 5). If we wish to avoid all the confusion of that dreadful day and all its subsequent misfortunes, let us now, in this our day, frequently meditate upon them, and avoid sin, which alone can involve us in eternal misery. "If we would judge ourselves," says the same Apostle, "we should not be judged" (I Cor. xi, 31). If we would examine ourselves with sincerity, according to our best ability, would accuse ourselves in the secret tribunal erected by Him who is to be our future Judge, with real humility and contrition of heart, would punish in our flesh the sins we have committed, according to the greatness of our offenses, or rather according to the greatness of our repentance, we should escape the humbling manifestation of the last day, and the sentence of eternal reprobation. My friends, let us consider that "the night is now past, the day is at hand," and, therefore, "let us now arise from sleep" (Rom. xiii, 11). Have you not been hitherto slumbering in fatal lethargy, and that, too, on the brink of a precipice, down which, had you unhappily fallen, you must have been precipitated into hell? Oh, then, awake, ye who sleep, arise, "no longer make provisions for the flesh in its concupiscences, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ," walk henceforward in all His ways, that you may escape the sentence of the wicked, and be admitted to the joys of heaven, there to praise and glorify your God forever!

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT

ON THE EXAMPLE OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

"What went ye out to see?"—Matt. xi, 9.

SYNOPSIS.—John's embassy to Christ; its result. Christ's testimony to John. John's character; his detachment from the world; his penance; his zeal; his constancy. John as a prophet. These traits in opposition to the vices of the worldly. The lessons we are to learn. The virtues we must practise.

The disciples of the Baptist entertained so high an opinion of their master, and were so strongly attached to him, that they were unwilling to persuade themselves that Jesus was the expected Messias, and were disposed to view Him in the light of a rival, whose increasing reputation they considered as injurious to the fame of their respected teacher. To eradicate from their minds these dangerous sentiments, John avails himself of the account which they themselves had brought to him in his confinement, and sends two of his disciples to Our Lord, that from their own observation they might be convinced of the superior character of Him who "stood in the midst of them, and whom they did not acknowledge." Upon their arrival, they find our blessed Saviour surrounded, as usual, by a vast multitude whom He was instructing, and whose sick He was restoring to health. He gave them sufficient proofs of His being the desired Deliverer promised to their fathers; and when they had gone their way, He speaks to the people concerning His illustrious precursor, "of whom it was written" by the prophet Malachi (iii, 1): "Behold, I send my angel, and he shall prepare the way before my face." This prediction was strictly verified in the person of the Baptist; and the Church proposes to her children on this Sunday, the example and character of St. John as exhibited to us by Jesus Christ himself; to encourage us to attend to his voice, crying out to us at this time, as formerly to the multitude that came out to hear him, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight his paths" (Matt. iii, 3). Let us, my Christian brethren, make a few reflections on what our divine Master spoke to the people concern-

ing St. John; by taking an attentive view of his character, we shall be enabled to improve our own, provided we be sincerely desirous of our own improvement.

When the disciples of St. John the Baptist had returned to their master with sufficient evidence that Jesus was the Messias, the hope of Israel, and the expectation of the Gentiles, having observed the blind restored to sight, the lame recovering the use of their limbs, the lepers cleansed, the deaf recovering their hearing, the dead arising to life, and life eternal disclosed to mankind, by the gospel of salvation; then did our Saviour bestow that great encomium upon St. John, by which He declared that "among them that were born of women, there had not arisen a greater than John the Baptist" (v. 11). "What went you out into the desert to see?" said He to the multitude (v. 7). "A reed shaken by the wind?" No, my brethren, St. John in his whole conduct was regular and uniform; he had, early in life, retired into the desert, and there had continued in secrecy and solitude, conversing only with the Almighty, until he was called by heaven to exercise his public ministry, in announcing the arrival of the world's Redeemer, in "baptizing, and preaching the Baptism of Penance for the remission of sins" (Mark i, 4). St. John was not a reed blown to and fro by every varying wind; his public was the same as his private life; he was the same amidst the pomp and splendor of a court and the horrors of the desert; neither his sentiments, nor his external appearance, nor his manner of life, was altered. His zeal for God's honor and for virtue was inflexible. Neither the caresses nor the menaces of a prince could shake his constancy: and even in a prison he attends to the duty of his mission with the same assiduity as in the full enjoyment of liberty. But where shall we find this reed that is shaken by every breath of wind? Let us look toward ourselves, my brethren, and we may perhaps find a remarkable resemblance in our inconstancy. We know what duty requires of us; we sometimes feel the sting of keen remorse at our neglect of it; the terrors of God's judgments flash before our eyes and strike us with terror; and then for the moment all is fervor, and the most generous resolutions are formed but to be forgotten before the close of the day; nay, it may be, before the expiration of the very hour that gave them birth. How often does it happen that persons go through life, continually experiencing their inconstancy and lamenting their irresolution? In the ardor of sudden zeal they seem lifted

up like the cedar, and bid defiance to the storm; but like the yielding reed, their virtue bends before the slightest temptation, the first disgust or smallest trial of human respect or worldly deference. They are bowed down to the earth, and their aspiring virtue falls to nothing. Whatever takes its origin from violence and impetuous passion, is sure to be of transient duration; virtue and virtuous resolution, to be permanent, must proceed from God, and be grounded on humility. "But what went ye out to see? a man clothed in soft garments?" No; for "John was clothed with camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins" (Mark i, 6). It was not to be expected that they should find a man studious of dress and particular as to his attire, amidst the horrors of a wilderness. Sumptuous apparel, costly ornaments, and the luxuries of the table, are to be looked for with the great and powerful of the world. "They that are clothed in soft garments are in the houses of kings" (v. 8). Ambition and extravagance often stimulate to rivalry or imitation those whose limited resources are exhausted in the competition: the vain desire of appearing above what they are ruins thousands; while ostentation, prodigality, and parade, are allowable in no situation or circumstances; an overflow of wealth and superfluous riches can never justify the careless profusion of extravagance: while the crumbs that fall from the rich man's table are desired by the destitute Lazarus, can the rich possess that which they may justly lavish in useless and wanton expenses? In the gratification of illicit or unnecessary pleasures? In folly and vice? Oh, no, my brethren, extravagance and prodigality, profuse expense and unnecessary waste, are excusable in no circumstances. But, then, the overflow of virtuous economy is to be poured out into the bosom of the poor; and is it possible that, having the means of relieving the wants of a fellow-creature, we can refuse to do it, either to indulge in lavish squandering, or to gratify a sordid avarice? Or are our hearts so callous to every delicious sentiment, to every choicest impulse of human nature, as to behold the sorrows of a fellowman, of a brother, and not consider ourselves as concerned in his sufferings? Oh, if, possessing reason, we can so act, we have no claim to religion; and though *men* by our *nature*, by our hard-heartedness to our fellowmen we seem to renounce our best claim to humanity; while by want of charity toward our brethren we forfeit our right to the bounty of our God, the Father of all. "He that hath the substance of this world, and shall see his brother in need, and shall shut up his

bowels from him; how doth the charity of God abide in him? (I John iii, 17).

It is by our exertions in favor of our fellow-creatures that we are to prove our love of God; for, as the same Apostle says, "in this we have known the charity of God, because he hath laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (Ibid. v. 16). From St. John the Baptist let us learn a suitable detachment from the things of the earth; let his clothing and diet confound our pride and vanity, and disengage our hearts from a love of this world. We do not live in the "houses of kings"; nevertheless, are we not guilty of leading an effeminate, indolent, and voluptuous life? Are not we "clothed in soft garments," by pampering and indulging our bodies as far as we are able in our respective situations? Were we even exalted in our rank, and dwelt in the palaces of kings, we should not then be exempt from the obligation of doing penance; and yet in the inferior station in which Providence has placed us, we do it not; we wish and we endeavor to want for nothing; we embrace no voluntary privation; and if we are compelled to submit to privation in certain cases, it is always without merit, because it is always with reluctance and murmuring. "But what went ye out to see?" continues Our Lord, "a prophet? yea, I tell you, and more than a prophet. For this is he of whom it is written, Behold I send my angel, and he shall prepare the way before my face. Amen, I say to you; among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist."

The precursor of Our Lord was a *prophet,* because he announced the coming of the Messias; he was *more than a prophet,* because he not only announced the coming of Our Lord, but pointed Him out as present in the midst of His people; because he showed Him to be the Saviour and the Judge of men; because he prepared the way of the Lord, preaching penance; and finally because him the prophets foretold as the "angel sent before the face" of the world's Redeemer. Therefore are we informed by the declaration of our Saviour to the multiude, that "among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." Blessed was this faithful ambassador of the Most High, in thus meriting the praises of Jesus Christ! he sought to do the will of God, and to obtain His approbation. He flattered not the vices of men in order to gain their applause; he boldly reproved their vices, that he might

draw them to repentance and mercy; he was, at the time when our Redeemer pronounced His panegyric, "bound and in prison" (Matt. xiv, 3), for daring to reprimand an adulterous and incestuous prince for his scandalous conduct.

Wo to you, my brethren, if instead of seeking the applause of heaven, your mean ambition aspires no higher than the empty approbation of poor mortals, your fellow-worms, who frequently encourage, flatter, and commend that which is deserving of severest reprehension; who abandon those whom fortune has forsaken, and reserve their praises for power and prosperity. It was in the lowest step of adversity that Jesus thus extolled the Baptist; not in his own hearing, or in the hearing of his disciples; we seek the praises of men, who, while they commend, and fawn, and flatter to our faces, or before our friends who are likely to convey to us the sweet intelligence, never, perhaps, in other circumstances, condescend to mention our names but with a view to criticize our performances and abilities, to censure our intentions and motives, to condemn us and ruin our character in the estimation of others. Oh, pitiful delusion! You know this to be the case; you practise the same perfidy in regard of others; flattering them when present, when absent vilifying and reprobating their actions, words, and whole conduct; and yet you are so weak as to be pleased with encomiums which you are well convinced are no more than the effusions of insincerity and deceit. My brethren, be wise, and seek glory and riches where they are to be found; not on earth, but in heaven; not among men, but with God. Great as was the precursor of Our Lord, yet if any exceed him in humility, he is greater than St. John. "He that is the least in the kingdom of heaven," says Our Lord, "is greater than he" (v. 11). Oh, then, my brethren, humble yourselves before the Lord; prostrate at His feet implore the great and undeserved mercy which He has promised to repenting sinners. Eradicate from your hearts every sentiment of self-esteem and vain-glory; shun the circles of vanity and dissipation, at this holy season in particular, sacred as it is to recollection and penance. The year is drawing to a close, and life is rapidly advancing; you hear of the ravages of death on every side; prepare to fall beneath his scythe: prepare the ways of the Lord, that falling here by death you may arise again to glory and happiness.

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT

ON THE NECESSITY OF ASCERTAINING OUR PREDOMINANT PASSION

"Who art thou?"—John i, 19.

SYNOPSIS.—The treatment of John the Baptist by the Supreme Council—its result. John's attitude; his perseverance. The fight against our predominant passion a necessary condition for salvation. This pre-supposes knowledge of that passion. Self-examination will show the root of the evil to be one of the capital sins, usually pride, avarice or lust. Necessary weapons are (1) Determined effort; (2) Avoidance of occasion; (3) Humble prayer; (4) Assistance of our Blessed Mother; (5) Perseverance.

The supreme council of the Jews had manifested their aversion for the precursor of Jesus Christ by a formal opposition; but the Baptist in withdrawing himself from the effects of their resentment into Bethania across the Jordan, in the vicinity of the desert, did not abandon his ministry, but renewed the exercise of his functions with the same undaunted freedom as if he had received no molestation whatever. The number of his followers increased daily, while the opinion entertained of him at Jerusalem, as of a prophet, impressed a stigma of odium on his enemies, and particularly on the authors of his former persecution. It was probably with a view to efface the shame, or repel the imputation of having persecuted this favorite of the people, that the council sent to St. John this solemn deputation of the priests and Levites. Having approached the man of God, they immediately inquire of him who he is, what is his character and office. Unwilling for a moment to usurp the dignity of the Messias, he confesses without disguise that he is not the Christ, but only "the voice of one crying in the desert, make straight the way of the Lord" (Is. xl, 3). The question which the priests and Levites put to St. John, we ought to put to ourselves; each of us ought to ask himself, with a sincere desire of receiving a direct answer, "Who art thou?" The knowledge of ourselves is of the utmost consequence, if we wish to live lives acceptable to our Creator and our future Judge. Every duty pressing upon us as Christians, every peculiar obligation incumbent on us in our particular state of life, every neglect of our several duties, every

transgression against God, and every evil propensity of our nature should be discovered, if we wish to perform what He who made us requires at our hands. To this effect, it is of the utmost consequence, in the first place, that we should by a studious examination inform ourselves what is our master passion, the predominant affection, the ruling propensity in our heart which seduces us from the line of duty, and engages us in sin. To prompt you to seek and subdue this principal enemy to virtue, I shall, this day, as far as time will allow me, endeavor to convince you of the necessity there is of your discovering this predominant passion, of the necessity of declaring immediate and unceasing war against it, and shall point out to you by what means you may contend against it with the best success.

It is lamentably true that some persons give themselves up to the commission of almost every species of vice, so that it is difficult to select any particular habit which may seem to predominate. Yet even in these cases of consummate depravity, were sufficient attention paid, some leading propensity might be discovered, from which, as from a root, the rest derive their origin. This gives motion, and strength, and direction to the others, and, if encouraged, will introduce a variety of evils into the soul. Hence we may say with safety, that the salvation of the Christian depends principally on the resistance he makes to this his capital enemy, which being once subdued as the Goliath of the Philistines, the rest scared and confounded will easily be put to flight. The predominant passion is generally to be found among the capital sins which are the redundant sources of innumerable evils; and it behooves you, my brethren, to look well into your hearts, that you may trace to its origin every spiritual malady that afflicts your souls. If you perceive within yourselves a disposition to set yourselves off in the eyes of the world, if appearance is your chief study and aim, if you endeavor to be thought superior in virtue, credit, wealth, or personal accomplishments to those who are far above you, or if the applause or admiration of others is your constant desire, and influences all your motions and operations, your heart is infected by a deadly pride: if you on every occasion display an overruling disposition, a proneness to find fault, an impatience of contradiction or control, seek the cause in the same unhappy vice of pride. Let the young examine well, whether the cause of their many lapses into sin does not originate in vanity, or whether a love of pleasure

does not expose them to those temptations which they find to be followed by frequent transgressions.

Let the slave to unlawful desire or impure pleasures examine whether lust be the radical source of his shameful gratifications, or whether they be not occasioned by the indulgence of the sensual appetite, and in eating and drinking; whether intemperance inflame the blood, and impel to shameful commissions. The same may be the case with the litigious man, whose understanding, obscured by the fumes of liquor, sees every argument inverted, and hence becomes displeased at what was perfectly harmless, and is enraged without the slightest provocation. Let a studious examination take place, and beg the grace of God that it may be effectual in discovering the origin of all your disorders in the discovery of this ruling passion. Often unperceived the tyrant of your souls will execute his mandates, and call forth the exertion of his inferior passions, and these at his command and by his direction lay waste the interior, while through life the author of numberless calamities is unobserved; and persons sometimes vainly flatter themselves that they are wholly free from that passion which exercises over them supreme dominion. In the early part of life persons of both sexes are hurried away by a love of pleasure and dissipation; they are left, as I may say, without experience, to struggle with every temptation to which they can be exposed in a world that is lost to God; for parents, forgetful of their own youthful failings, leave their youthful progeny to contend with danger or to perish in it; nay, frequently seek out the danger, and precipitate into it their best hopes and dearest treasure. Her vanity first allures the thoughtless female; she is pleased with being noticed and admired and caressed; soon does the licentious desire enkindle in the breast; the spark is cherished, till soon, too soon, a conflagration ensues which consumes the whole soul. From henceforward every serious occupation is renounced as of intolerable stupidity, prayer is a disgusting exercise, and the duties of situation are wholly resigned. As life advances, the sentiments of religion, if not assiduously cultivated, lose the impression which they make in youth: then persons engage in the pursuit of empty riches, and to possess them sacrifice health, and peace, and conscience. But it would be endless to describe or enumerate the various enemies to which the soul of man often falls a prey. When one passion has been indulged for a while, it introduces a train of other passions which sometimes depose the original

possessor of the heart, only to place another on the throne of empire. You must be convinced how necessary it is for you to discover and exterminate this tyrant of your souls, to use every endeavor to subdue its fury, and prevent its increasing influence. Begin without delay; if it be yet recent, eradicate it before it strike deep into your soul: the tender sapling is easily plucked up, but when rooted by time, keeps firm to its hold; whatever be the passion that is cherished with partial indulgence, whether anger, or pride, or intemperance; whether lust degrade your affections, or envy rankle in your heart, or sloth paralyze the noble energies of your soul, destroy the false deceiver, crush the serpent while young, nor press it to your bosom, or in return you will receive a deadly sting.

Having discovered from what quarter danger is most to be apprehended resolve immediately and without delay to encounter this foe to your eternal happiness. Let fervent and assiduous prayer ensure to you the aid of heaven; prayer like that of Judith before she undertook her heroic enterprise against the enemy of the people of God. Without God's assistance you can do nothing, nor must His aid be expected without earnest entreaty. Fortified in His protection, proceed with courage; let it be your first and principal care to avoid every occasion which can lead you into temptation; let those places and those companies be resolutely shunned, and those friendships be heroically renounced, which have before proved fatal to your virtue. If you give way in this, however induced by human respect, or pressed by solicitation, you are undone: if you yield in this particular, expect not to triumph in the contest, much less flatter yourselves that you are endeavoring to fight the good fight, to do what God requires of you. When exposed to danger which can not be avoided, call on God, and with Christian humility bear the contest by a positive resistance in certain cases, as in pride, avarice, and even anger. In these, and most others, it will be permitted to use the force of reason, and to aim at a detestation of the vice by considering its enormity. But in regard to sins of lust, your safety is to be expected in flight alone. Though the most filthy and degrading of vices, yet in the moment of temptation, it would be absurdity and presumption to raise up its filthy images in the mind, in order to overcome the evil suggestion. Oh, no; in the spirit of unfeigned humility, arising from a conviction of our natural corruption and frailty we must fly: our eyes, our ears, and all our senses must be closed upon every object that can excite the passion: our arms must

be stretched out, our looks directed only toward the Cross of Jesus.

In the conquest of those vices that have gained force in our souls, it will be useful to cut away those supports by which the predominant vices are surrounded and upheld, by beginning with those which will make the least resistance; nor will it be found unserviceable to make frequent acts of the opposite virtues, joining with them sentiments of affection toward them, and purposes of practising them as occasion may offer. These resolutions must be renewed from day to day, and frequently in the day; and though you may not perceive that your success is instantaneous, or such as you could expect, be not dismayed; perseverance is indispensably necessary for success. They who are truly in earnest, will often, with sincere humility, enter into themselves, and seeing the horrors of their souls with grief, will raise their hearts to Jesus Christ, and by the torments He endured for man, and by the sacred Blood He shed for our souls, will conjure Him to pity and relieve them. Often will they address their supplications to that distinguished favorite of heaven, the Virgin Mother of our Redeemer, that she will present their petitions at the throne of grace and mercy; that she, who now assists before her Son in heaven as the refuge of sinners, the comforter of the afflicted, and the help of helpless Christians, will intercede for them, that they may subdue the enemies of their souls, and be made worthy of the promises of Christ. Oh, my brethren, we have much to do, that we may eradicate our passions and save our souls; but we have an almighty God to assist us, and in Him we can do all things. We have powerful advocates in heaven to plead in our behalf, and they are anxious for our prosperity. They desire to see us united to them in bliss, and they are ever supplicating in our favor. But, above all, we have for our mediator and advocate Jesus Christ the just, who has spilt His Blood for us on the Cross, who now offers us those graces which He purchased for us by His death, those powerful means which will, if employed by us, make us victorious over His and our enemies, and bring us to that happy kingdom where, the perils of life being over, the good shall reign with Him happy forever.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT

ON THE PREACHING OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

"He came into all the country about the Jordan, preaching the baptism of penance for the remission of sins."—Luke iii, 3.

SYNOPSIS.—John's baptism differs vastly from the baptism of Christ. Was a baptism unto penance. His preaching a preparation for his baptism. Preached to all classes. His message: (1) General exhortation to penance and to a new life; (2) Particular application according to the needs of each class. His success came not from miracles, but from his own sanctity. Application: (1) Penance necessary. Apply the ax to the root of the tree; (2) Exhortation of fulfillment of every Christian duty.

Again, my brethren, is the precursor of the Messias presented to us in the spirit and power of Elias, announcing to the children of Jacob the coming of the Redeemer, the mighty God, the Prince of Peace, and preaching to them the "baptism of penance for the remission of sins." This baptism of John was not remissive of sin in virtue of its institution, and of similar efficacy with the Christian Sacrament. No; it only led to the forgiveness of sin by exciting sentiments of sorrow and producing worthy fruits of repentance. It is, therefore, distinguished by the Baptist himself from the Baptism instituted by Jesus Christ as being a *baptism of penance;* a baptism *in water only;* whereas that of Christ was to be *a Baptism of the Holy Ghost,* by virtue of which a man was to be *born again,* by a *spiritual* birth, and without which, as Our Lord himself expressly declared, "a man can not see the kingdom of God" (John iii, 3). Hence we read in the Acts of the Apostles that they who had been baptized "in the baptism of John," were re-baptized "in the name of the Lord Jesus"; hence St. Augustin terms the baptism of John the remission of sins in hope; hence the illustrious Origen says that those who had been baptized by John were again baptized by St. Paul, because the regeneration of the soul or the birth of the spirit was not from John, but from Christ, by the ministry of His Apostles; and hence the Council of Trent pronounces that "whoever shall affirm that the baptism of John possessed the same power and efficacy as the Baptism of Christ, let him be anathema" (Section 7, Canon 2). But, my friends, the preaching and baptism of John were a preparation

for the preaching of Our Lord, for the institution of the Sacrament of Baptism, and the propagation of the gospel of peace. Long before had the prophet Malachias foretold His appearance in these words: "Behold I send my angel (*i. e.*, my ambassador or messenger) and he shall prepare the way before my face. And presently the Lord whom you seek, and the angel of the Testament, whom you desire, shall come to his temple" (iii, 1).

Let us consider this day what this forerunner of the Lord preached to the people, and in what manner his testimony was confirmed; in the second place, let us observe the effects of his preaching upon those who heard him, and endeavor to derive some benefit ourselves from his preaching and their example.

We read in the Gospel that St. John the Baptist went forth into the desert of Judea and preached to the people, exhorting them to repentance; that the same John "had his garment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins, and that his meat was locusts and wild honey"; that he said to them: "Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. iii, 2). To him flocked Jerusalem and all Judea, the rich and the poor, the soldiers and the publicans, the Pharisees and Sadducees, and with a strong voice, and in energetic language, he reproached them with their faults, and menaced them with God's intolerable vengeance, if they continued rebellious against His commandments. They beheld his manner of life with astonishment, but he employed the ascendancy he had gained over them not to exalt himself, but to enforce obedience to Him who was to come after him; "one mightier than himself, the latchet of whose shoes" he professed himself "unworthy to untie" (Ibid. ii). He cautioned them not to glory in being the children of Abraham, for it was in the power of God to annihilate the descendants of that patriarch, and yet to keep His promises made to His seed, "by raising up even from the stones children to Abraham" (Luke iii, 8). To the soldiers he recommended a peaceful disposition, mildness in their behavior and deportment, and content of mind under the difficulties and dangers to which their situation of life exposed them. "Do violence to no man, neither calumniate any man, and be content with your pay" (Ibid. 14). He exhorted the publicans, by which name in Scripture is understood the collectors of the public imposts, to be honest and just in the discharge of their duty; not to yield to the suggestions of avarice, nor by extortion or imposition to improve their circumstances, but with upright care strictly to

perform what their office required of them. To the publicans he said: "Do nothing more than what is appointed you" (Ibid. 13). To the people at large he recommended the practise of good works and deeds of charity. "To them he said: He that hath two coats, let him give to him that hath none; and let him that hath meat do in like manner" (Ibid. 11). He exhorted them to penance, that they might escape the wrath to come; admonished them that the Mighty One, whose coming he announced, was nigh at hand; that He would judge the sinner with severe justice, and condemn the impenitent to everlasting torments. There shall come "one mightier than John, whose fan is in his hand, and he will purge his floor, and gather the wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Ibid. 17). These, and "many other things did he exhorting preach to the people" (Ibid. 18). But what proof did he offer in confirmation of his doctrine? Did he perform miracles, and by them demonstrate the sanction of heaven? No; for, as the Scripture mentions, "John indeed did no sign." It was by the sanctity of his life, which the evangelists detail with particular exactitude, that he proved his divine mission and enforced his exhortations to repentance. He himself set the example, and by the purity of his life, in the midst of a desert, he displayed a dignified contempt of worldly vanity. By his own austerities he animated those whom he denominates a "brood of vipers," to renounce their crimes, and to do penance for them.

My brethren, it is for us to profit by his exhortations, by his life and conduct. We are to remember that the "Lord is nigh," that "great is his empire," and of his "kingdom there is no end"; that it is in vain to "flee from his wrath," which is only to be appeased by humility and works of penance, by "filling up every valley," that is, the emptiness of our hearts engaged by a love of terrestrial objects; by "leveling every mountain" of pride and self-conceit, "by making the crooked ways" of our perversity "straight," and the "rough ways" of an unsubdued passion "smooth." We must remember that the "ax is laid to the root of the tree," and that "every tree that yieldeth not good fruit shall be hewn down and cast into the fire" (Matt. iii, 10). That the Lord will "gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire" (Ibid. 12). If St. John, "than whom a greater hath not risen among the sons of women" (Matt. xi), led a life of such austerity, shall not we be required to submit to the rigors of penance? and in shunning

the comparatively light mortifications of which we so much complain, shall not we be inexcusable? If we were sincere in the professions which we make, of detesting our sins, and of loving God, we should not be forever seeking that which is pleasing to flesh and blood, and avoiding whatever is calculated to subdue the corruption of nature, and to bring it into subjection to God.

But let us now consider what effects were produced by the preaching of the Baptist. The people had gone out from their homes into a dreary desert, actuated by a desire of receiving instruction from the forerunner of Our Lord; and this truly laudable motive drew down upon them the blessing of God. When men are animated with a proper disposition of pleasing God, and possessed with a firm determination of rigidly adhering to the dictates of conscience and the mandates of duty, difficulties sink and disappear, the grace of God is increased in the soul, and a noble fortitude impels to great achievements. If ambition can urge its votaries to brave danger, in pursuit of a paltry attainment, shall not the Christian, warmed with the love of God, and strengthened by His grace, fight the battles of his Lord with courage, and pursue his glorious career with perseverance, when victory is sure to be the result of unwearied endeavor, and immortal bliss and honor the reward of conquest? The hearers of St. John, seeking only their own improvement, were rewarded by God, in being called by Him to repentance. They inquired of Him what "they were to do" in order to please God and save their souls; they received His words with humble obedience, "and were baptized by him in the River Jordan, confessing their sins" (Mark i, 5). While you hear the summons of St. John, follow the example of the multitude. Be assiduous in hearing the word of God, but let it always be attended to with docility, and an earnest desire of applying it to the exigencies of your souls. Amidst the decay of piety everywhere so visible, one duty of a Christian life seems to be attended to with fondest attachment. To assist at sermons is in this country considered a pleasing employment, and excepting amongst the most irreligious and profligate of society, is a practise generally observed. But even the word of God may be ineffectual, like His secret graces, if it be sought or received with improper dispositions, or from improper motives. If vain curiosity lead you to hear public instructions; if you are anxious only about the composition, the style, the delivery of the preacher; if, as in other public exhibitions, you seek only to be entertained, or if you

hear only to apply occasional passages to the foibles or vices of your neighbor, never to your own; if these, or similar motives, actuate you in hearkening to sermons; or if, when they are over, they are immediately let loose from the memory; idle is your pretended devotion, like the professions we so often hear from persons who impressively declare that to hear a good sermon is to them the greatest satisfaction. But let it be your care to beg of the Almighty that He will assist you in applying what you hear to His honor, and the salvation of your souls, and let it be your endeavor to benefit by what you hear, by practising whatever may be useful to you in your particular circumstances.

Many there are who content themselves with approving the advice of the preacher, but stop there, never thinking of practising what he advises. But do you, my brethren, take example from those who heard the precursor of Our Lord: say to God with the publicans and the people: "What shall we do?" and having heard what is required of you, set about the performance of what you find is your duty without delay. Lay the ax to the root of your passions; cut down every enemy of your soul; every aspiring thought or desire of odious pride, vanity and ambition. Confess your sins with unfeigned repentance; throw off every habit that makes you displeasing in the eyes of your sovereign Lord; and, above all, for all depends upon this, shun the occasions of sin, whether they proceed from your own negligence and temerity or from the solicitations or suggestions of others. Consider how trifling a pleasure, how contemptible an interest, perhaps how vile a gratification, robs you of God's love and friendship, and will, if continued to be cherished, rob you forever of His happiness, and plunge your souls into unquenchable fire. Now, then, while time is in your hands, given to you by the Almighty for this very purpose, at this acceptable time, in these days of salvation, confess your sins with sincere repentance, with horror and detestation of your past guilt, and of whatever can displease your heavenly Father. The day of retribution is at hand, the Lord "will come, and will not delay"; He will then "bring to light the things hidden in darkness, and manifest the designs of hearts" (I Cor. iv).

Let this be the fruit of what you hear this day, and let the week into which we have just entered be spent in studious and impartial investigation; in probing your hearts to the bottom; in laying before your eyes every secret disorder of your soul, and in imploring

the grace of a true conversion, a contrition of heart for sin, which may continue to the end of your lives. Resolve to confess your sins at the tribunal of penance to the ministry of Christ, "the dispensers of the mysteries of God." Then shall the Blood of Jesus cleanse your polluted souls from all the abominations of iniquity, from the filth and ordure of sin; then shall your hearts beat with sentiments of joyous exultation and lively gratitude; then shall the sunshine of peace irradiate your consciences; the feast of Christmas be a festival of spiritual gladness, and your spirit be renewed in the Lord, who will come to visit you and lead you by the hand through life, till He brings you to the joys of His kingdom. Amen.

CHRISTMAS DAY

ON THE LESSONS TO BE DRAWN FROM THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

"This day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David."—Luke ii, 2.

SYNOPSIS.—During the Advent season the Church implored the mercy of God upon all. Christmas a day of contemplation as well as a day of joy. (1) Jesus born in distress and poverty teaches us a true appreciation of riches and the things of the world and a true appreciation of poverty; (2) Great reason to rejoice at the birth of Christ, but that rejoicing should be Christian, not pagan.

During the time of Advent the Church of God, the spouse of Jesus Christ, has been raising her voice to the Lord in fervent and incessant supplications, praying that "the heavens would shower down its salutary dews, and the clouds rain down the just one; that the wisdom of the Most High would beam upon her children; that the root of Jesse would bud forth; that the orient star, the splendor of eternal light, the sun of justice, would enlighten those who sit in darkness and the shade of death;" we have besought the God of mercy and peace, that "the King of nations, and the desired of them, would make haste to deliver us;" that "the key of David, which openeth and no one shutteth, which shutteth and no one openeth, would draw the wretched captive from the dungeon, and loose his chains;" that "the Emanuel, the King, the Legislator, the expectation and salvation of the nations, would commence his reign, and save his people."

In these and similar expressions of longing desire and ardent hope have we been invoking the Lord God; and behold! now has again recurred to us the anniversary commemoration of the nativity of Jesus Christ! Happy day! on which were displayed the power and love of God in a manner that should call forth the astonishment of angels and men for all eternity! on which the eternal word of the Father, an equal God with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, came down from His heavenly throne, assumed our lowly nature, and submitted to its infirmities and sufferings. "The word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us" (John i, 14). Let us from the

contemplation of this mystery endeavor to improve ourselves in virtue, and to eradicate that pride and self-love which is the source of all our evils, and which is so powerfully combated and crushed in this stupendous mystery of Our Lord's incarnation and nativity.

It was by indulging a sentiment of rebellious pride that the celestial spirits deserved to be expelled from the heavenly courts, and it was the same spirit of proud ambition, in desiring to be like to God, that drove our first parents from the earthly paradise, and entailed upon them and their latest posterity all the calamities under which we groan. The seeds of the same fatal pride, the same aspiring ambition, are sown in our nature; and notwithstanding our acknowledged infirmity, corruption and malice, we too frequently indulge a conceit of our own merit, and even place ourselves in opposition to our Supreme Legislator and Sovereign Judge, by a contempt of His authority and violation of His law.

But, my brethren, draw near to the manger of Bethlehem; approach to your Saviour in His humble birth, and meditate the Lord of glory in the lowly form of a helpless infant! Oh, how contemptible does all human grandeur appear before Him! How is all earthly pride confounded, trampled under foot, and annihilated in the birth of Jesus!

In the eye of faith, in the contemplation of the sincere Christian, does not all the glitter of pomp and ostentation sink into obscurity at the sight of this voluntary debasement of the Son of God? While poor mortals, insects buzzing in the sunshine of a summer's day, or just fluttering for an hour, and then perishing as to this world, boast the nobility of their birth, unfold the tables of their genealogy and glory in the achievements of their ancestors, whose cold remains mingled with common earth should confound the absurd pretensions of their descendants; Our Lord and Our God, the King of heaven and earth, chooses to be born of an humble maid, in obscurity and want! While to receive into the world the princes and potentates of the earth every costly preparation is made, and all around is festivity and joy; to receive into the world the Prince of Peace, the world's Redeemer, and the Lord of all things, nothing is done; when born no accommodation is found for Him; and while the angelic host proclaim an event of glory to God, and peace to men, the only attendants on the Lord of glory are an helpless virgin and an humble mechanic! What a prodigy of humiliation, what a miracle of love! What, not a house to receive the God of heaven!

No asylum for the world's Redeemer! The earth affords no roof to shelter its Saviour! Behold the virtuous pair seeking in vain throughout the town of Bethlehem a place where they can repose their wearied limbs, and find protection for a night from the severity of the weather! Acquaintance, friends, relatives—even the inns are shut against them. The expected Messias, whom Abraham "saw in spirit and was glad" (John viii, 56), "the hope of the nations and the glory of his people Israel," solicits admission and is refused! There was "no room in the inn" (Luke ii, 6).

Oh, Bethlehem! long foretold as the happy spot in which should be born the Ruler of Israel, how dost thou repay the enviable pre-eminence? Ungrateful city, thou leadest the way in the long series of ingratitude which an illfated people displays toward its benevolent Lord—the God of heaven! According to His eternal generation the Son of God, and according to the flesh the legitimate descendant and rightful heir of Royal David.

But let us not be scandalized at the want and distress of our infant Saviour. Let us remember, for our encouragement under lighter trials, for our invitation in the duty of self-denial, and as a stimulus to our love and gratitude, that this state of complete dereliction was the voluntary choice of Jesus incarnate. Yes, my friends and fellow Christians, we know, and it is our joy and consolation to know, that He, "by whom kings reign," and from whom the princes of the earth derive power; to whom the palaces of the globe, the owners of them, and the globe itself, were subject, could have appeared on the earth with all the ensigns of royalty, surpassing the magnificence of Solomon in all his glory; but He chose the form of poverty to recommend it to His followers, as a condition, not degrading in the contemplation of heaven, but pregnant with real happiness, and the surest road to future bliss and glory. Would not one imagine that henceforth poverty would never be despised; the poor, bearing the livery of their master, never want protectors? But alas! while the meanest representative of earthly power is regarded (such is the blindness of man!), the servants of Jesus Christ, clothed like Him, and bearing His insignia, are treated with scorn, reproach, and even insult. Oh, let us condemn our folly and perversity, my beloved brethren, if hitherto the unsubstantial glitter of gold has been suffered to dazzle our eyes, and has made us pay respect and homage to our fellowmen only in proportion as they were gifted by fortune with this precarious possession; and let us

endeavor to emancipate our minds from the general delusion, that riches confer worth and wisdom, and virtue, and real dignity. Miserable infatuation! Notwithstanding the example, as well as the positive assurances of eternal truth to the contrary, riches are considered as the greatest blessing of life, the chief good, on which human happiness absolutely depends. Poverty is still deprecated as the worst of evils, and the children of poverty are discarded by the rich, as made of other mold, and formed by other hands. However mean the condition of men, they ever wish to wear a better appearance than their real circumstances would sanction, and when they can not conceal their indigence, their vanity is gratified by being noticed by those who are in opulence. For this end they meanly court and cherish the most distant acquaintance with those above themselves, at the expense of all honorable independence, and frequently by obsequious cringing and fulsome adulation; while they behave with haughty mien and deportment to those whom Providence has placed at ever so trifling a distance beneath themselves. Even those whom they once loved and associated with, or (shame to Christianity) those who by the ties of blood are nearly allied to them, if, perchance, they be less affluent than themselves, are disowned in the presence of their richer acquaintance, lest the knowledge of their poverty should be a disgrace to their connections. O mean ambition and filthy pride! How severely is such conduct condemned by the example of Jesus, and how honorable would it be to us as Christians and professed followers of Him were we to imitate our heavenly model!

If superior to the applause, and careless of the censures of the world, we sought with earnestness only the approbation of heaven, how calm and peaceful would be the state of our souls! how consoling the testimony of conscience! how glorious that spiritual independence which constitutes the liberty of the children of God, uninfluenced by human respect and human apprehensions! To free us from the slavery of pride, and the cruel tyranny of Satan, Jesus was born into this world. He came to confound the pride of man, and to crush the powers of darkness; to raise us from the captivity, to which sin had reduced us, to the rank of His children; from the darkness of sin and error to His own admirable light, and the splendors of His heavenly grace. He came to bear us away from the power of the devil and from hell; to redeem and save us. "This day is born to you a Saviour." Oh, with what sentiments of

rapture and exultation ought we not to receive these grateful tidings! the gladsome intelligence here announced is not like the joys of the world, which, ushered in with noise and show, yet vain and empty, amusing the imagination for an hour, and then lost forever; gratifying the senses, but being merely sensual, often filthy and impure, leave naught behind but bitterness and remorse. No, my brethren, the tidings announced to man in this great mystery proclaim the gate of heaven thrown open for mankind, the mansions of bliss again offered to the children of Adam, the gates of mercy so long shut against man, at length unfolded, and the wide expanse of everlasting day, the endless perspective of the heavenly paradise displayed to our view!

Oh, then, let us rejoice with unfeigned jubilation! let us sound forth the song of gladness! and with the celestial choirs sing, "Glory be to God on high," etc. Let sacred transports dilate our bosoms; let us, in union with all the host of heaven, glorify our God, who has wrought these wonders for us, and has sent us by His Son the blessings of "justice and peace till the moon be taken away" (Ps. lxxi, 7). It becomes the Christian to rejoice at the remembrance of His redemption, effected by the Son of God incarnate; but what should be the nature of his joy? It is usual with worldlings to dedicate this sacred solemnity to profane rejoicing, to proclaim the feast of dissipation, to hold out the sign of thoughtless merriment, and to establish a mutual intercourse of giddy mirth and dissolute joy. There amidst the clamor of the passions, the tumult of confused riot is mistaken for enjoyment, dissipation and intemperance for real pleasure. There, too often, the loose jest is indulged, the song of lewd or ambiguous meaning hearkened to and applauded, reason pushed from her seat of command, and the soul left without rule or government.

Is it to joys like these that the Church invites at this time? Was the approach of these scenes announced to the shepherds as "tidings of great joy to all people"? O God, forbid! that you, my brethren, should forget your spiritual deliverance here proclaimed to you, that your rejoicing for man's redemption should be testified by orgies fitter for the feasts of Bacchus and the heathen goddess of impure love, than the feast of Jesus incarnate. No; you will shun with carefulness whatever can be displeasing to your God; whatever would be a derision of His poverty and sufferings, who for your sake submitted to distress and nakedness. Not that I pretend

to condemn the harmless enjoyment of well-regulated recreation. I say to you with the Psalmist, "Let the just feast and rejoice" before God (lxvii, 4); but let temperance preside at your tables, and innocence at your councils. "Let your modesty be known to all men" (Ep. to Phil. iv, 5), and the Lord will not be displeased with your merriment of Christmas, but will be Himself in the midst of you. The cheerfulness of your exterior will be responsive to the gladness of your souls; free from the reproaches of a guilty conscience, having lamented and confessed all your sins at the feet of your infant Saviour in the stable of Bethlehem, your joy will be that which arises from gratitude and love; no misgiving will embitter your innocent pleasure, no remorse follow after; but, rejoicing in the Lord, you will taste the sweets of virtue here, and its never-ending rewards in the life to come. Amen.

THE SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

ON THE UNCERTAINTY AND VALUE OF TIME

"Brethren, the time is short; it remaineth that . . . they who use this world, be as though they used it not; for the figure of this world passeth away."—I Cor. vii, 29, 31.

SYNOPSIS.—Value of time seen from the dignity of the giver. Eternal happiness or misery depend upon it. While there is time we may repent, but this should not lead us to presumption. Time is a loan from God and the future is uncertain. Things of eternity the only things of value. How different now seem the things that were once deemed so important. Things of time soon pass away. Experience of the past year tells us this fact. Death and decay all around us. Sorrows and sufferings likewise transient. Time to repent. God is ever merciful to the repentant sinner.

My Christian friends, why are we here assembled? For what purpose are we now met in the presence of God, in this His temple? If sensible of what we owe to Him, and of our ingratitude; if, conscious that His omniscience has marked our baseness, and that His justice will greatly punish us, if we continue obstinate to the tender calls of His mercy, we are come hither, while time is yet allowed us, to implore forgiveness; if we come now to throw ourselves upon His clemency, who has said that if "he shall come in the second watch, or if he shall come in the third watch, and shall find us watching, happy shall we be" (Luke xii, 38); if we are now resolved to renounce our past guilt, and to consecrate the remainder of life to the service of our Maker, it is well. Let us be thankful to our God that it is still in our power to redeem what has been squandered away, and that, by properly using that which is in our possession, we may still save our souls. Let us, then, on this day, my brethren, make an oblation of our hearts and souls to God, pierced with sorrow for our iniquities, and bowed down in unfeigned humility at the sight of our unworthiness; let us now resolve to repair our past sterility, by a glorious fecundity of good works, a fruitfulness in every kind of virtue. To animate us in the prosecution of this good purpose, let us make a few reflections on the *value* of time; and, to prevent the fatal consequences of final impenitence, we will consider its *uncertainty.*

To be fully convinced of the value of time we have only to con-

sider the dignity of the giver; it is put into our hands by the Almighty himself, and given us as the means of procuring an eternity of happiness; for on the use or abuse of time depends our happiness or misery for all eternity. Happiness or misery, heaven or hell, depend upon the manner in which we employ the short space of our existence here on earth. A seed is sown in mortality, from which will spring up eternal joy and glory, or never-ending wo. Since, then, such great blessings are lost or won, only as our days are misspent or profitably employed, this gift of the Most High must be of inestimable value, and they who throw away time despise a treasure by which they might purchase enjoyments, riches, dignity, and glory, incomparably superior to the momentary gratifications and ostentatious glitter of this short life. Still it is undervalued by every human being; by some it is despised, and even prostituted to the very worst purposes, and often does the God of heaven and earth behold this invaluable present cast away with contempt, and even employed as the means of giving Him displeasure! It is true; such is the goodness of our heavenly Lord, that if we repent in the last hour of life, and with sincere compunction turn to Him, even when length of days no longer holds out the power of sinning, He will pardon the greatest sinner; yet has not this deceived thousands, who, forgetful that a sincere conversion is, at all times, the effect of His grace; that, if they despise this grace when offered to them in the days of health, they can not expect it will be given in greater abundance, so as to make a stronger impression, when, by an accumulation of ingratitude, they have choked up every avenue to their souls; forgetful that "they know not the day nor the hour" when they shall be hurried before the tribunal of unerring justice, that our Judge has himself declared that "at what hour you think not the Son of Man will come" (Luke xii, 40); has not, I say, this confidence on the goodness of God deceived thousands, who, forgetful of the uncertainty of their mortal life, have lived in sin and died victims of presumption? Still art thou good, O God, and of thy goodness there is no end! It is not thy mercy that faileth, but the perversity of man that renounceth thy mercy! For, "as it is appointed unto all men once to die, and after this judgment" (Heb. ix, 27), when the hour of death arrives, judgment must follow, and impartial justice will pronounce a sentence of calamity and misery to the guilty sinner, and of joy and happiness to the righteous.

If time were at our command, if even the duration of our lives

were known to us, though we should be guilty of the most consummate baseness in deferring our conversion to God till the close of life; yet our conduct would not be marked with the same imbecility, or rather madness, as at present, when, uncertain of enjoying to-morrow, we spend to-day in sin, and at night lie down in imaginary security or torpid apathy.

Our time is a present from God, or rather it is a loan from Him, passing through our hands, to be so cultivated, improved and perfected by us as to give satisfaction to the Supreme Master, and entitle us to the high reward which He has engaged to bestow upon His faithful servants. Time is not within the control of man; and when its course, in our regard, shall be stopped, no one can tell. How rapidly does it move along! and when passed, it is beyond our reach and can never be called back! The future is uncertain! The aged who bend beneath a load of years, who have been entrusted with a greater portion of time than the generality of our species, will acknowledge (and, oh, that their testimony were attended to!) that, on looking back, the days that have passed from their earliest infancy, which they can scarcely distinguish from the mist which envelopes the first scenes of their existence, to their present state of decrepitude, when, perhaps, they are sinking into a second childhood, have flown away with inconceivable rapidity; that the intervening space is but a span, short and inconsiderable, and that if this life were not ennobled by its connection with the life to come, it would contain nothing truly deserving our attention. Alas! how much of our lives, which even appeared once to be of high moment, is now disregarded or forgotten. How much of it do we know only from the relations of our parents or nurses! whose anecdotes contain only those circumstances which show how little the greatest of us have been, and ought to humble us in our own eyes! However young you may be, yourselves can testify to the vanity of all that passes away with time. When bearing in view some future enjoyment, the heavy moments have seemed to linger in their course, and hold back the expected fruition; yet when the desired gratification has arrived, how quickly has it passed away; and if in the very moment of possession it was not embittered by disappointment, how soon have all its sweets ceased to give delight, and the much boasted joy perished in oblivion!

If aught on earth could be said to bestow a real satisfaction, yet it is quickly over; and if its nature were more durable, ours would

require us to resign it; and fatigue would force us to surrender what inclination continued still to relish. No sooner is the moment present than it is past, and when gone by it is irrevocably departed, leaving no mark of its existence. We just perceive that it is; when, lo, it is no more. The vessel which divides the waves, the arrow which cleaves the air, the lightning which is shot from the cloud, are but feeble expressions of the rapidity of the fleeting moments; and in the fleeting moment the whole of our time consists. Oh, then, seize it, my brethren, as it flies along—let it bear on its wings the treasure of virtue; you can not arrest its course, you can not recall it; send it charged with the riches of good works to be deposited for you till your arrival in the regions of eternity. Let the wealthy reflect that their earthly riches are not secure; violence may wrest them away, misfortune may scatter them abroad, revolution may annihilate them. Let the strong and vigorous, the student and the sage, consider that strength may suddenly be converted into helplessness, and the light of genius be in a moment eclipsed. Let the weak admirers of their own or other's beauty bear in mind that all personal charms may be tarnished by sickness or accident, that the time is near at hand when only spiritual comeliness or deformity will be regarded. "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vain; the woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised" (Prov. xxxi, 30). Why, then, will the inconsiderate children of the world follow vanity, and neglect their dearest concerns? "Ye sons of men, how long will you be hard of heart? why do you love vanity, and seek after lying?" (Ps. iv, 3).

While time, this gift of God to all mankind, is so valuable in itself, the consideration of its uncertainty ought to make us extremely careful of it. It hastily moves on; the impatient moments pursue each other in rapid succession, and we are ignorant when that last moment shall arrive, that was destined from the beginning of time, nay, before time began its course, to close our existence. We are on the eve of terminating the present year; a circumstance which ought to inspire a thousand serious and salutary reflections. Where are now the plans, the projects, the amusements, of the last twelve months! All the pleasures of the year are over; in reviewing them, many perhaps will give us pain, as having originated or terminated in sin! The sorrows, too, of the past year are all over! Oh, had this time been spent in mortifying the flesh and subduing the passions, the pains of self-denial and penance would now be over—

their reward would be in reserve for us, and never perish. The fasts of the Carthusian are all over, as to their difficulty; the rigors of Cistercian abstinence, silence, and solitude are felt no more, but their deeds of Christian fortitude in the subjection of the flesh to the spirit, their pure oblations of praise to the Deity, their fervent acts of deep-felt contrition, have been carried up to heaven by assisting spirits, and shall be proclaimed aloud to the whole world on that great day, when the page of earthly history consumed by the last fire shall have consigned to oblivion or eternal infamy actions which have been blazoned through our little globe, our mole-hill, as deeds of high renown—these shall perish! but the virtues of the Apostles, confessors, martyrs, and virgins, the glorious performances of the saints of God, which derived their principal merit from their being concealed from the eyes of men, shall then be revealed in all their genuine luster, and shall shine through eternal, endless ages.

Oh, my brethren, how have the hopes of worldly men, formed in the course of this twelvemonth, been defeated and overthrown! From the throne of empire to the lowest subject, how many disappointments have occurred! How many, indulging in flattering speculations, began this now expiring year with highest expectations of promised riches, grandeur, matrimonial felicity, or various earthly prosperity, and are now sunk into despondence, or involved in misery! Their riches have disappeared from before their longing eyes; the hopes of matrimonial joy have ended in a union of persons, and disunion of hearts and sentiments, in perpetual strife, discord, and irreconcilable hatred; here a spouse, a parent, a friend, has been snatched away by death, and there sickness has deprived hundreds of every social and domestic enjoyment, who in the beginning of the year displayed the roseate bloom of health upon their cheeks, and looked forward to many years of vigor, life, and joy! How many entering into life with fortune, health, and every prospect of lengthened prosperity, now lie numbered with the dead and are almost forgotten by the living! Their bodies are moldering in the earth; but where, oh, where are their souls? This question should arouse surviving mortals to a sense of their own danger; should make you, my brethren, alive to the concern of your salvation.

Few of you but can, without any effort of the mind, call to your recollection an acquaintance, a neighbor, and some perhaps a nearer and dearer connection, a relative or bosom friend, whom death has

torn from you since this day twelvemonth. I held out to you a remembrance of the uncertainty of every human being with respect to future time. Some of those with whom you spent the last Christmas in festivity and gladness (may it not be in sinful enjoyment?), are now no more; have been tried before the great tribunal of God, for those actions in which you participated. You have been spared; but what profit have you derived from their fate, and the display of God's mercy to you? What virtues have you acquired? What vices have you rooted out? What passions have you overcome? Alas! have you not rather gone backward instead of advancing in God's service? And as to penance, in order to cancel your sins by satisfaction to your God, has it been so much as even seriously thought on? Were your eternal lot to depend upon the performances of this year, what would be your case for eternity? And yet this time last year you performed the same duties to which you have this Christmas attended, and with as much apparent fervor then as now. Oh, my beloved friends, whether this day twelvemonth you may be alive to make a revision of another year, is a secret hidden from the sight and knowledge of man. Perhaps I may not live again to address you on the same subject, but may be mentioned on this day to compare the subject of this discourse with the event of my decease. No one of us is certain of surviving another year; only this is certain, that all who are born are born to die. Oh, then, if we be not insensible to every best and dearest interest, if we be not determined to shut our ears to the voice of reason, religion and God himself; let us now form one plan for the year to come, which partakes not of the nature of mere speculation, but is sure of succeeding. Let us give our whole selves to God, and, as He has created us, correspond with the end which He proposed in our creation. We know it well; we know it is for our welfare; and we know the means by which the end is to be obtained. If we wish to be happy with Him hereafter, we must be obedient to Him here; and let the love of Him predominate over every affection of our hearts. Let us do this, my brethren; let us delay no longer; let us be roused from our lethargy, repair the past, sanctify the present, and lay up treasures for immortality.

If the pleasures of life pass quickly away, its pains, its sorrows are not less transient; and if the view of criminal gratification be afflicting in the retrospect, the review of penitential atonement, past in its pains, yet eternal in its effects, affords a real satisfaction. Let

none be discouraged; God is inexorable only to the impenitent sinner; whatever have been your crimes, repent and amend, and God will have pity on you. His mercy is offered to you while life remains, and His love invites you to repentance. To the humble sinner He is compassionate and kind; turn to Him and He will receive you; He can not resist the tear of true compunction, the sighs and groans of a heart sorrowing for its offenses committed against a loving God. He will not despise the work of His own hands; He will cleanse you from all your iniquities; if your souls are red as gore with guilt, He will cleanse them from all their defilements, "wash them, and they shall be whiter than snow." He will vest you with the robe of righteousness, adorn you with His choicest graces, and, after the short time of earthly probation, raise you from this vale of tears, and place you in the kingdom of His happiness, where, with His elect, you shall praise and enjoy Him for endless ages. Amen.

FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION

ON THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART

"After eight days were completed that the child should be circumcised, his name was called Jesus."—Luke ii, 21.

SYNOPSIS.—Reasons why Christ submitted to circumcision. Effects upon us: love, gratitude, repentance. Lessons to be learned: patience, love of the Cross, value of voluntary penance, and resignation to the will of God, avoidance of spiritual danger, excision of self-love, thorough reformation of life. How we should use the new year: remembering the vanity of worldliness, the uncertainty of life, the certainty of death.

To show the excess of the love which Jesus bears mankind, He no sooner is born into this world than He begins to suffer, and when but eight days old He begins to shed His sacred Blood, submitting to the painful and humbling ceremony of circumcision. It was a precept of the law imposed upon the Jews to distinguish them from the rest of mankind, as a pledge of God's fidelity to his engagements, made to the patriarch Abraham; while it implied on the part of God's people a firm determination, and offered, as it were, a security that they would fulfil His holy law in all things. It was an injunction laid on sinners, subject to the ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation. But Jesus Christ, who was innocence and sanctity itself, was under no obligation of submitting to it. Nevertheless, that He might prove to all the world forever that He had not assumed a mere appearance of our nature, but had taken to himself a real human body; that He might demonstrate to the Jewish people that He was a descendant of Abraham, of whose seed was to come the promised Messias; and that He might instruct His followers to submit, after His example, to the laws of God, and of His Church, though the compliance may be attended with inconvenience and difficulty, He submitted to this legal ceremony.

He was also willing to terminate with honor a divine, but temporary institution, by condescending to its observance in His own person. Oh, my beloved friends, in this, as in all the actions and sufferings of our blessed Redeemer, we have much that calls for our

tenderest love, much that calls for our liveliest gratitude; or, as St. Bernard has it, we discover in this mystery much to love and admire, and not a little for our imitation. Let us endeavor to convince ourselves of these advantages, to be derived from the circumcision of Our Lord, that we may, at this particular time, collect every means which may contribute to the glory of God and the salvation of our souls.

If we consider what our divine Lord submitted to in this ceremony of the law, for the sake of His unworthy creatures; that, while we are employing every expedient to avoid suffering the slightest inconvenience, though our sins call for incessant mortification and expiatory penance, Jesus Christ subjects his innocent, pure and delicate body to voluntary pain on our account, we must either dissolve in tender compassion, love and gratitude, or acknowledge that our hearts are lost to every amiable sensibility, and are harder than the adamant.

Oh! behold your Lord and your God, clothed in our flesh, yet free from the guilt of sin, and incapable of committing it; see Him, scarce eight days old, begin to suffer, yielding up His body to the knife of circumcision! He suffers, not as other infants suffer on similar occasions, who could neither know nor fear the operation; with a body of tenderest form and liveliest sense of suffering He possessed a perfect use of reason, and foresaw the pain, and knew the smart, that He was to endure, and yet offered himself willingly to shed the first fruits of His Blood in this painful manner. Oh, prodigy of love and mercy, to see the Lord of heaven and earth assume the nature of man, and, in the helpless form of an infant, bleeding beneath the hand of His sinful creatures! Oh, wonderful and incomprehensible humility! He bears the form and appearance of sinners, and suffers for their sins! While yet a tender babe His Blood begins to flow; and even now His soul is grieved at the enormities He comes to expiate, and is rent with sorrow at the afflicting sight of so many thousands, who, notwithstanding all that He has consented to suffer for their salvation, notwithstanding the abundance of graces which He has procured for them, by the effusion of His Blood, and by expiring in cruel agony on a Cross, will still, with inexorable obstinacy, and inflexible malice, despise His mercies, disregard His graces, reject the glory and happiness of His kingdom, purchased for them at so dear a rate, trample on His adorable Blood, and, with unaccountable des-

peration, turning their eyes from Him, rush to the gulf of wo, and plunge into eternal misery.

If the words which I have employed excite consternation, be it known and remembered that words are mere sounds, that even the fire of this world is but painful imagery compared with the fire of hell; this is given to us for our use and comfort, but the fire of hell is enkindled and kept alive by the breath of an angry God, for the never-ending punishment of His insolent and ungrateful enemies. Be it remembered, too, that this dreadful evil is the lot of every unrepenting sinner; that into this abyss of wo are precipitated as many as prefer the follies and vanities of this life, to the observance of God's law and His service. Oh, can the sinner consider that ardent charity, that zeal and love, which glowed in the breast of our new born King, our suffering Redeemer, when He prefers a base enjoyment, a transient advantage, to the call of duty and the possession of heaven! Behold your Saviour, He already feels impatient, as it were, to suffer for you; His love for His undeserving creature makes Him delight in these early humiliations and sufferings, and look forward with satisfaction to that day when He shall shed the last drop of His Blood for us, and the work of man's redemption shall be consummated.

But in this mystery, we may discover much for our imitation. Our blessed Lord teaches us, by His divine example, to endure with patience the sorrows and crosses which are inseparable from our mortal state, and even to entertain a love of suffering, by which our souls are purified from the dross of earthly affections, our sins atoned for, and our thoughts and desires divorced from sublunary objects and pursuits, and indissolubly wedded to heaven. He shows us in what manner we are to suffer for our offenses, by resigning our own will to the will of Our Eternal Parent; and by His example He condemns the guilt of those who will do nothing, and suffer nothing for their own sins, but in all things seek the indulgence of their own humors, inclinations, and passions. He teaches all Christians to entertain a lowly opinion of themselves; to be convinced of their own insignificancy and nothingness; to be indifferent to the opinion formed by the world concerning them, and to be willing to bear the ill-will and ill-word, the reproach, the slight and contempt of men, provided their own conscience condemn them not, and they can indulge a well-founded hope that the great Judge of right and wrong, the Judge of the living and the

dead, be not displeased. The principal fruit which our Redeemer wishes us to reap from this mystery, is a spiritual circumcision, which consists in a perfect resignation to the will of God, in whatever He appoints, and a faithful compliance with it, whenever it is pointed out to us. This spiritual circumcision is required of us, by an indispensable law, if we are desirous of keeping the commands of God, of being faithful followers of Jesus Christ, and of saving our souls. If we wish to enjoy the fruit of the promises made to the faithful Abraham, we must submit, not to a corporeal circumcision, but to a circumcision of the interior. Every irregular and superfluous desire of the soul must be retrenched; a strict guard must be placed over all our senses, and every motion of the heart; a complete and unreserved renunciation of every criminal gratification of sense and appetite, and a cautious reserve even with respect to what is lawful; not proceeding to the utmost boundaries of that which is licit, lest we be drawn beyond the line of separation, and fall into that which is illicit. The desires of riches, of honors, of bettering our conditions, of rising to notice or esteem, must be repressed; for if indulged, they will introduce into our hearts avarice and ambition: the lawful recreations, which are necessary to unbend the mind, must not be too far encouraged, lest dissipation enervate and corrupt the heart. If we would be Christians in reality, whatever is obnoxious to Him must be eradicated and cast away; every sacrifice which He demands of us must be made, though it should require of us the last drop of our blood. Reputation and fortune and health and life itself must be cherished with an affection subordinate to the love of God, or the affection is irregular. Self-love must be watched, and at every attempt to rise must be restrained with severe coercion: a thousand little dangerous inclinations, which are excited on every occasion, proceed from this, our domestic enemy. Self-love commands a legion of restless cravings, which ruin us by the indulgence of them. To conquer this subtle adversary, it will be necessary to form frequent and habitual sentiments of compunction, a constant vigilance, obedience, submission to correction, patience under crosses, and voluntary self-denials. Prayer must also be recurred to, in order to obtain the divine assistance, and a full determination must be formed to crucify and destroy whatever opposes the reign of the pure love of God within our soul. Look to yourselves, my brethren; examine every secret recess, every fold and doubling of your hearts,

and invoke the light of the Holy Ghost to guide you through the dark and winding labyrinth. Be not of the number of the *uncircumcised* of heart, but cut down, with unsparing hand, everything that rises in contradiction to God and His law; cut away every excrescence that is displeasing to your Creator; remove whatever is prejudicial to the true Christian spirit.

This is the circumcision which is required of you; a circumcision, not of the flesh, but of the spirit; a thorough reformation in life, conduct and sentiment; and this you are particularly called upon to set about on this day, on which we enter upon a new year. Bow down before your Lord, and pay Him the just homage of praise and adoration, for His infinite attributes, His power, His majesty, His supreme dominion over us and all things: offer Him the tribute of gratitude for all His benefits, but especially for allowing you still time to appease His anger, and to serve Him: for giving you admission into another year, in which you may redeem the past, and save your souls. Oh, how many, within the last month of the departed year, hath death cut down, who would resign with joy all the comforts and delights of life to possess only this day of the new year which has been given to you. Again does your Lord invite and call; again does He place before you His goodness and love, manifested in the mystery of His Incarnation, and by all His tender kindness does He conjure you to come to Him, and partake of His feast of love in the kingdom of His Father. Oh, then, obey His call; be not deaf to His invitation. The next new year may not be yours! If worldly custom allows men to wish their friends happiness at the commencement of the year, much more do I wish you happiness in this new year, which God has furnished to you, rich with grace and spiritual joy. Happy be its beginning to you all, my Christian friends, happy be its progress, and thrice happy be its conclusion.

While the votaries of pleasure and the victims of giddy dissipation are studious to invent methods of banishing thoughtfulness, and making the flow of time as imperceptible as possible, let it be your care to employ every moment, and to pour it out of your hands, grateful for the reception you have given to it during its short stay with you. As it passes into the regions of eternity, let it bear honorable testimony to your hospitality and attention; nor proclaim, as it enters the presence of the King of time and eternity, the shameful negligence of which you have been guilty; of the

contempt which you have shown it, as well as they, whose hopes are nevertheless confined to the short duration of time, forgetful of eternity.

Remember, you have no certainty of being allowed notice of that summons, which is to call you before a tribunal, where your lot is to be decided forever; you have no security against surprise, the consequences of which are infinite and irretrievable, except that of a sincere and speedy conversion; of being upon your guard against sinning again; of dedicating the remainder of your time to God, and to His love, and of frequently imploring His grace and mercy. "Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times . . . that you may be accounted worthy . . . to stand before the Son of Man" (Luke xxi, 36). Soon will the troubles of life and the severities of penance be at an end; the pleasures of the past year are now no more; they no longer afford delight: had the late year been spent in mortification and self-denial, the bitterness of repentance would not now be tasted, while the reward would be yet to come; the glory would be yet reserved, and hope would encourage to perseverance. Let religion prevail over passion; let reason triumph over an inconceivable infatuation: labor not for perishable enjoyments, nor seek the gratification of the moment, which, when the moment is passed, afford no further satisfaction; but labor for eternity, for pleasure that admits of no alloy, of happiness that shall never end; of happiness pure and everlasting, in the society of blessed spirits, and in the enjoyment of God.

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

ON THE ENGAGEMENTS CONTRACTED IN BAPTISM

"He upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, he it is that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost."—John i, 33.

SYNOPSIS.—Reasons why Christ submitted to the Baptism of John. Effects of the Sacrament; contrast of soul before and after Baptism. Grace; adoption by Father; incorporation with Son; chosen temple of Holy Spirit; right to kingdom of heaven. Obligations assumed in Baptism; to renounce sin forever; to acquire virtue; to be obedient to authority. Have we been faithful to our promises, have we fulfilled our obligations? The punishment; the reward.

The baptism which our Saviour received at the hands of John was not a Sacrament similar to that which is administered in the Church of Christ; it had not of itself the virtue of remitting sin, but was a ceremony made use of by the precursor of Our Lord, in order to prepare the people for repentance, and the future baptism of Jesus Christ. "They flocked to him in crowds, and were baptized by him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins" (Mark i, 5). "At the same time came Jesus also, and was baptized by John, and lo ! heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended upon him in a bodily shape as a dove, and a voice came down from heaven, Thou art my beloved son, in Thee I am well pleased" (Luke iii, 22). The doctors of the Church assign several reasons why our blessed Saviour condescended to be baptized by John; the principal of which are, that in so doing, He meant to give to His followers an example of humility and obedience, to sanctify the waters, as it were, by receiving them upon His sacred Body, and to communicate to them the virtue of remitting sin in the Sacrament of Baptism which He should institute for the remission of sin. Thus, my brethren, what took place when Our Lord was baptized by John represents to us the effects of the Sacrament of Baptism, which we have received in the name of the Father, etc. These effects I intend this day to call to your attention, that I may excite in your souls a gratitude toward our gracious Lord, and as there are certain obligations connected with these effects, and in consequence of the promises we made to God when we received the benefit of this Sacrament, I shall remind you of your baptismal

engagements, that knowing what you owe to the Almighty, for His mercy, you may evince your gratitude by your good conduct.

In your youth, my brethren, you were informed that the Sacrament of Baptism, the first and most necessary of the seven, was instituted by Jesus Christ for the remission of original sin, and that even actual sin, if the person baptized be guilty of any, is washed away from the soul by these waters of regeneration. But have you ever duly weighed the nature, extent and importance of these effects? Have you dwelt in thought and reflection on the state in which you were before you had the happiness to receive this Sacrament? Conceived in sin and born in sin, we were each and all of us children of wrath, enemies of God, and slaves of the devil. A just sentence of condemnation by which we were excluded from the sight of God forever, from the celestial no less than the terrestrial paradise, was in force against us, and by Baptism, the sin in which we were conceived, and in which we came into the world, was entirely blotted out from our souls.

It is true there still remained in us a fatal propensity to evil, and this we shall experience as long as we continue in this our mortal state; but it remains in us, as the Council of Trent observes, to exercise our virtue by contending with it and subduing it: for to receive the meed of victory, we must fight and conquer; it remains to keep us in humility and diffidence of ourselves, and to make us sigh with fervor to be delivered from this land of difficulty and danger, to make us aim at heaven, where temptation and conflict will be no more.

Before Baptism we were the children of Adam, objects of displeasure in the sight of God, and the devil had power over us; but by Baptism we were made the adopted children of God, objects of complacency in His eyes; the devil was ignominiously expelled from our souls, and we received a right to an inheritance in heaven. We became the brethren of Jesus Christ, and co-heirs with Him. This was the effect of sanctifying grace received in this Sacrament, which not only obliterates the stains of sin, but makes us partakers of the divine nature, purifies our hearts, and infuses into our souls the grace of God, and the gifts of His Holy Spirit. Nor is this all; we are incorporated with Jesus Christ, as members with the head. By virtue of this union with Him who is the head, we become members of His holy Catholic Church; we belong to it as a part to the whole, and she regards us as her children. We re-

ceive a right to participate in the other Sacraments, and all the spiritual goods and treasures which Jesus imparts to His Church. Lastly, Baptism imprints on our souls an indelible character, stamping us with the seal of the Diety, the signet of the most high and adorable Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. By it we belong to the Father, who has vouchsafed to make us His children; to the Son, who has condescended to consider us as His brethren by the assumption of our nature; and to the Holy Ghost we belong, as being made His temples.

This was exactly represented in the Baptism of Our Lord, who there manifested Himself in His human nature as one of us, while His heavenly Father, by a voice from above, acknowledged Him for His Son; and the "Holy Spirit, coming down as a dove from heaven, remained upon him" (John i, 32). Are we not then called upon by an irresistible inducement to indulge in sentiments of liveliest gratitude at the consideration of the excellence of this sacred and beneficial institution, and of the inestimable favor conferred upon us by the Most High! Are we not impelled to entertain an esteem and respect for our bodies, and much more for our souls, not for ourselves only, but for all who by Baptism have been adopted by the Father, incorporated by the Son, and chosen by the Holy Ghost, as His temples? Do we not tremble at the very idea of profaning what has been thus consecrated to God? Can we shudder at hearing that the sacred vessels have been violated and profaned by irreligious and contemptuous treatment, and not be moved at the profanation of our souls by sin after they have been consecrated by God himself to His service, and made the abode of His Holy Spirit? If we have been so unhappy and so profane as to defile these living temples by mortal sin, let us be covered with merited confusion, and penetrated with keen regret for our misfortune and guilt, and while we earnestly supplicate forgiveness for the past, let us determine to renew our engagements, and to observe them inviolate henceforward to the last moment of our lives.

Let us now consider what are our obligations, in consequence of the promises we made in Baptism. They correspond with the effects produced in us by that Sacrament. We are cleansed from sin, and at the same time we renounce sin forever. We were made the children of God, members of Jesus Christ, and the temples of the Holy Ghost; but we then promised to renounce the works and

pomps of Satan, and to lead lives worthy of the dignity conferred upon us. We were admitted members of the Church of Christ, with a right to the participation in all its blessings; but at the same time we promised obedience, respect and attachment to this same Church, of which we became members. These are the promises we made at the sacred fount, and all heaven witnessed our engagements. They are frequently termed vows, and, indeed, by them we become professed religious of the order of Jesus Christ: they are essential to our state, for no Christian can be dispensed from them; they remain in full force all our lives, and every moment of our lives. Have you then, my brethren, considered what you have so solemnly promised? Have you made it your care and study to fulfill your engagements? Have you remembered what St. Paul inculcates, when writing to the Romans (vi, 2), he says, "Know ye not that all we who are baptized in Christ Jesus, are baptised in his death? For we are buried together with him by baptism unto death, that as Christ has risen from the dead, by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life." My brethren, it is for you to examine whether you, being baptized in the death of Christ, have continued "dead to sin, but alive to God in Jesus Christ Our Lord" (v. 11). How often, after being signed with the sign of your redemption, have you again fallen into captivity, and by sin have trampled on that Blood by which your ransom had been purchased?

Having received that badge of your profession and dignity on your foreheads, have you not blushed at your high character, concealed your religion when required to profess it, through fear of the world, and with a pusillanimity less excusable than that of Peter, because more deliberate, denied your Saviour from a dread of censure or ridicule? You were signed with the same sign upon your breasts, to signify that your hearts should be consecrated to your Saviour, and His law should be preserved in the midst of your hearts; on your shoulders, to express your readiness to bear the crosses which divine wisdom might inflict upon you, to take up your cross on every occasion, and to follow your Redeemer: and have you done this? Has the Cross been dear to you? Has the faith of the Crucified, the religion of Jesus, been professed without fear or shame? And have you ever been ready to participate in the suffering of your Lord, and to unite yours with His, that thus yours might acquire worth and merit from the union? Having

received into your hands the lighted taper, as an emblem of the faith of which you made profession, a faith *showing itself by good works,* have you been careful and zealous as often as it was in your power to communicate the light of faith, to diffuse the knowledge of the truth; and by your good example and edifying comportment, by your strict compliance with the injunctions of your religion, have you induced your neighbor, who was disposed to follow the light; have you induced him to seek for certainty in all his doubts, for security of faith and inerrancy of doctrine in "the house of God, which is the Church of the Living God; the pillar and foundation of truth" (I Tim. iii, 15).

Many will be condemned at the last day for their indifference for the invaluable blessing of the faith, and cold disregard of their neighbor's salvation; for their deficiency, both in regard of divine and fraternal charity. You know that those who dissent from you in religion, even when they load it with aspersion and calumny yet know that it inculcates the greatest holiness of life, and they pay a kind of homage to the truth of your religion, when they exact a greater strictness of moral conduct from Catholics than from other persons, often exposing and exaggerating into crime that which in others would have been overlooked; and knowing this, have you been, on that account, careful not to let your faults be imputed to your religion? Have you preserved the white robe with which you were clothed in Baptism pure and unsullied? Have you courageously resisted the suggestions of Satan, whom you renounced? Have you called to remembrance that you then asked to be admitted to the faith of Christ, as a means of arriving at life everlasting, and that you were then answered in the words of Christ, "if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments" (Matt. xix, 17). You then, too, promised obedience to the authority established by Christ upon the earth. And have you faithfully obeyed the commandments of God and of His Church? Have you *avoided evil and done good?* or, having offended God by sin, have you sought the recovery of the grace of God by repentance? or have you lived on in that deplorable state, till conscience was lulled to sleep—till you became habituated to the malady with which your soul was afflicted—till you had repeated your iniquity, and increased your guilt—till your soul was covered with the leprosy of sin? Thus having deferred your conversion and repentance, being linked in fatal association, and if I

may use the expression, being now on terms of familiarity and friendship with the enemy of your souls, has not the Church invited you, in vain, to accept of mercy, perhaps commanded you, in vain, to "show yourselves to the priests" (Matt. viii, 4): "to wash in the pool of Siloe" (John ix, 7), and to be cleansed from all your defilements. The months have passed away, the festivals of the Church have gone by, the solemnization of the greatest mysteries of religion has brought no joy to your souls; you have slept in death. You have time for all the business of the world, but none for this, the most important of any. You have time for enjoying the relaxations and the pleasures of life, but none for the concern of eternity. And why? Because you have no love of God; no regard for anything beyond the present; no concern for your eternal salvation.

O almighty and most merciful God, how was it possible that Thou, who knowest all things, couldst endow Thy creatures with reason to turn it against themselves and Thee! Was it for this, O Lord that "Thou mad'st him but a little below thy angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor, and has set him over the works of thy hands!" (Ps. viii, 6). Well may we exclaim with the same royal prophet: "Man when he was in honor, did not understand; he hath been compared to the senseless beasts, and made like to them" (Ps. xl, 21). O Christian brother, who hast neglected thy God and thy best interests, to serve thy passions or to slumber in deadly sloth, how wilt thou be astonished when, awaking from thy dream, thou shalt discover that thou hast been feeding upon empty smoke, and shalt find nothing in thy hands! And what shall be the astonishment and regret of all those Christians who now so unconcernedly violate the commands of God and His Church, who hear with torpid indifference the voice of God; who can violate the precepts of abstinence, of fasting, of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, of approaching to the Sacraments, and the various ordinances of the spouse of Christ, and of Christ himself, without much concern, it may be without any feeling whatever; what will be their astonishment, their confusion and regret, when appearing as criminals at the bar of divine justice, the divine Saviour, the Redeemer of our souls, shall place before their eyes His commands and their promises? Having recalled to their remembrance the duties of their calling as Christians, and their particular obligations according to their respective situations in life; having placed before

their eyes the transaction of that important day, when in the presence of men and angels they accepted of the covenant proposed to them, of mercy on the part of God, of obedience on theirs, and vowed eternal allegiance to Him, He shall then expose their perfidy, compelling them to bear evidence against themselves. "Out of thy own mouth I judge thee, thou wicked servant" (Luke xix, 22). Then shall those nations, to whom God in His inscrutable judgment has not imparted the same abundance of graces as to Christians: and whose ingratitude will, consequently, be less, then shall they rise up in judgment against rebellious Christians, and be less severely punished. "It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you" (Luke x, 14). "For if in Tyre and Sidon had been wrought the mighty works that have been wrought in you, they would have done penance long ago in sackcloth and ashes" (v. 13). Even in the abyss of hell, in the lakes of fire and brimstone, additional confusion will pursue the ungrateful Christian. That august and indelible character stamped on his soul at his Baptism, and marking him out as heir to a kingdom, shall cause him to be pointed out by the damned, and subject him to eternal infamy even among the infamous partners of his ignominy and sufferings.

Shall it, then, be possible that the inestimable favors shown to us by the Almighty, in calling us to His faith, in redeeming us from sin, in restoring us to His love, are to be the source of our greater misery. Yes, my brethren, this will infallibly be the case, if while we are here on earth we prove faithless to our engagements. But let it not be so; let us prefer the friendship of God to His anger; the love of Him to an alliance with the enemy of God and man; the state of grace to the calamitous state of a soul in sin; the kingdom to which we are called to an eternal servitude under an implacable tyrant. Call often to your minds, my beloved friends, these two objects on which I have insisted this day: the *graces* and *honorable advantages* you received in Baptism, which can be lost only by sin; that is, by violating, what I also recommend to you as a subject of frequent consideration, the vows you made, and the obligations you contracted when you received that Sacrament. By reflecting on the first you will be excited to love and gratitude; by meditating on the latter you will be induced to live as Christians, worthy of your high calling, worthy your exalted destiny, children of God's grace here, and heirs of His eternal glory hereafter.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

THE MANIFESTATION OF THE GLORY OF JESUS CHRIST, AS EVINCED BY THE MIRACLE AT CANA IN GALILEE

"This beginning of miracles Jesus wrought in Cana of Galilee."—John ii, 11.

SYNOPSIS.—At the marriage feast Jesus gave the first public proof of His divinity. The glory was manifested by His omnipotence. Hence we believe all that He teaches. We hold firmly to the doctrine of the Real Presence, though the mystery is beyond the grasp of reason. We believe it because He said so. We learn also from this miracle to properly esteem the dignity and sanctity of the Sacrament of Marriage; that this state should not be entered into with improper motives or without due dispositions. Why the Church forbids marriage to her clergy; why she approves religious retirement.

Conclusion.—We should receive Christ's doctrines with docility and gratitude; we should ever have recourse to God and ever seek to please Him.

It was by this miracle of changing water into wine that our divine Lord distinguished Himself on the commencement of His mission. After being baptized by John, after fasting forty days, and associating to Himself a few disciples, He was invited to assist at a marriage feast in a small town of Galilee, not far distant from Nazareth, which had hitherto been the usual place of His abode. He had till this period led a life of retirement and obscurity, appearing like the rest of mankind, that no doubt might arise concerning the "reality of his incarnation"; but He now began to display that power which was to convince His followers of the "reality of his divinity." In fact, though the prophets had announced Him many ages before, though agreeably to the prediction of one of them, "a virgin had conceived and borne a son"; though the angels had proclaimed His birth, though the doctors of the law had declared that He was to be born in Bethlehem, and a star had miraculously conducted the wise men to that place; though the holy Simeon and the prophetess Anna had testified on the day of His presentation in the Temple, that He was the expected Messias; notwithstanding the Baptist had pointed Him out to the people, and

His Father speaking from heaven had declared Him to be His Son; yet He himself had performed no public miracle; it was this day and this occasion that He chose for manifesting His glory. The occasion was favorable; His disciples and a large assembly were present, and the consequence was, as we are informed by the evangelist, "that his disciples believed in him." Let us attentively review the Gospel, and endeavor to derive from it instruction, edification and spiritual improvement.

The first instruction which presents itself on the consideration of what was done by Our Lord at the marriage feast of Cana, is that in the miracle performed on that occasion we discover a convincing proof that Jesus is God no less than man. He changes one substance into another, not by any foreign external power, but by a power personally His own; a power exceeding all that mere human exertion could produce. It was to convince His disciples that flesh and blood neither assisted Him as the means, nor induced Him as a motive, that He said to His mother, "What is this to me and to thee?" (v. 4). Convinced of this His divine power, no less than His unerring veracity, we believe His doctrines, and assent to the mysteries which He proposes to us. Seeing that in the "supper of Cana" He changed water into wine, we firmly believe the mystery which in His "last supper" He made known to His apostles, that by a real and wonderful transubstantiation He then changed the substances of bread and wine into His adorable Body and Blood. Acknowledging Him for our God, we believe nothing is impossible or difficult to Him; and admitting, without presuming to hesitate, His sacred and infallible veracity, we receive His word. We seek not to abridge His power or diminish His tender charity; we believe that He has not only given Himself a bleeding victim for our sins, but offers Himself an unbloody victim of propitiation, and gives Himself to His servants for the food and nourishment of their souls. "No man," saith Our Lord, "can come to me, except the Father who hath sent me, draw him" (John vi, 44). "But all that the Father giveth me shall come to me" (*Ibid.* 37); therefore is this "saying hard"; but to those only whom divine grace conducteth not to divine faith, whom the Father draweth not to Himself and His eternal Son. Jesus Christ has said, "This is my body—this is my blood"; we thankfully receive the effusion of His goodness in the institution of such a powerful means for our salvation; we hear and believe, nor do we presume to doubt His power or to

curtail His love, by interpreting His words in a sense directly contrary to their obvious signification. Had a mere mortal delivered them, explanation would doubtless be necessary; because to make them good in a literal sense would exceed all human power; but when Jesus speaks them, and the only objection to the fact is the incomprehensibility of the performance, the acknowledged omnipotence of the performer immediately nullifies the objection. If He could become incarnate for the love of us; if He could die on a cross for our redemption; we believe that He can give us His immortal and impassible Body on our altars for the food of our souls; and we believe that He has done so, because He himself has declared it. He has assured us of the fact, and yielding to His express assurance, we captivate our understandings in obedience to faith, gratefully acknowledging His power, His wisdom, His goodness and love. Let us, my brethren, on this day, endeavor to revive and fortify our faith in this mystery, by the consideration of the miracle exhibited to us in the Gospel; and when present at the adorable sacrifice, open the eyes of your soul and adore your Lord and God. "Blessed are they who have not seen, and have believed!" (John xx, 29). But, in particular, when you approach to this divine banquet in which your Saviour feasts you with His true Body and Blood; when by a spiritual union He makes Himself the spouse of your souls, approach with faith and purity, and you shall "know him in the breaking of bread," and be enriched by an effusion of His graces.

A second subject of useful instruction, suggested by this Gospel, regards the Sacrament and state of Marriage. Matrimony is a Sacrament of the New Law, conferring grace to the parties receiving it with proper dispositions, by which they are enabled to serve almighty God in purity of heart and conduct; and happy they who, like those mentioned in this day's Gospel, invite Jesus to their wedding. Many, alas! too many, enter upon that state with dispositions very different from those required to draw down upon them the blessing of heaven: have no other view than the gratification of their passions; and, therefore, as the angel Raphael said to Tobias, "Shut out God from themselves, and from their mind . . . and over them the devil hath power" (Tob. vi, 17). But, my brethren, all who are preparing to enter upon that holy state, must begin by calling Jesus to their aid; consulting Him on the choice they are about to make, by fervent prayer. They should

invoke the intercession of His virgin mother, and consult His disciples; that is, they must seek for counsel from the directors of their souls, and from those friends who are not likely to advise them from interested or worldly motives; who will dare to speak their real unbiased sentiments. Alas! how generally does it happen that the intention is concealed, till it is immovably fixed, and counsel delayed till it is found necessary either to give it on one side or to withhold it. To gratify sensuality; to indulge, and not to restrain concupiscence, how often is the holy state of wedlock sacrilegiously profaned; to feed an unsatiable avarice, to acquire riches, which never can produce happiness, how many barter peace and joy for sordid gold: plunge themselves into a state of splendid misery, and not unfrequently seek a remedy to the wretchedness they have brought upon themselves in dissipation, licentiousness, and guilt! It is a pernicious error, which the devil endeavors by every artifice to promote, that the call of heaven is not necessary, for the state of marriage, and the consequences of this too prevalent error are incalculable. It is necessary both for the state itself, and for the individuals embracing it. All are not called to this state, therefore all should beg the God of wisdom and goodness that He would direct them in the choice of that state of life, which He in His providence has destined for them; and let all who design to embrace this state invoke the grace and light of God; not that He will miraculously interpose, and by a voice from heaven announce to them whom He appoints to be their partners through life; but that He, who orders all things as He pleases, will so dispose of circumstances and events, that their choice may be conformable to His will, and receive His benediction.

But while the young implore the aid of heaven, and seek counsel from discreet and disinterested friends, let not parents, from views of worldly policy or profit, attempt to force the inclinations of their children. The happiness of the parties depends on mutual affection, and to communicate this by artificial process, to excite it at command, is impossible. Let them claim, at most, the right of a *negative;* this is all that God and nature allow them; a compulsatory power they have not, and by pretending to it, they have, in numberless instances, defeated their own intentions and ruined their children.

It may not be improper here to observe that with respect to Matrimony, as well as many other points of our faith and discipline,

we are shamefully and pertinaciously misrepresented. St. Paul has observed (I Cor. vii, 32), that "he that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that are of the Lord; how he may please God; but he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world; how he may please his wife, and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and the virgin thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy, both in body and in spirit; but she that is married thinketh on the things of the world, how she may please her husband." Now the Catholic Church, wishing to make the ministers of God as free as possible from a solicitude for the things of the world; wishing to make them anxious for *all* entrusted to their care, by removing the claims to partial and peculiar affection, naturally and necessarily arising out of the matrimonial union; desirous also to attach them to the particular concerns, occupations and pursuits of the state of life to which they devote themselves, has determined that they who voluntarily embrace the sacred ministry (for she compels none to embrace it) shall renounce the concerns, the perplexities, the cares, and also the endearments of Matrimony, all of which being of terrestrial nature, more or less withhold the heart from an intimate union with God.

In the same spirit she applauds the resolution of those of her communion, who, observing the dangers to which their virtue is exposed by a continual intercourse with the world, and feeling their own frailty and infirmity, flee for security into the asylum of religious retirement, to chastise their bodies and mortify their passions; to restrain their senses, and invoke the divine aid by fervent prayer. Hence the enemies of our religion, to detract from the merit of these sacrifices, represent the Catholic Church as villifying the sacred institution of marriage, and "forbidding to marry" (I Tim. iv, 3). But so far from depreciating the institution of marriage and forbidding to marry, let it be remembered that *we alone* consider Matrimony as a *Sacrament* of the New Law, and that while others in certain circumstances dissolve the conjugal tie, and in allowing it to be subject to human dispensation, evidently suppose it a mere civil contract and human institution, we hold it in much higher respect, considering the bonds of sacred Matrimony, when but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man once united, as forever indissoluble, and proclaiming, in the words of our blessed Saviour, "that husband and wife are no longer two, put asunder" (Matt. xix, 6).

With respect to perpetual chastity which the Catholic Church does not *generally* command, but only requires to be observed when solemnly embraced and promised to God, the views and intentions of the Church may be easily discovered, by adverting to that which is subjoined by St. Paul, in addition to what I have above quoted from St. Paul's I. Ep. ad Cor. "This I speak to your profit; not to cast a snare upon you, but for that which is decent, and which may give you power to attend upon the Lord without impediment" (vii, 35).

Now, my brethren, from what you have heard in the Gospel of the day, and the reflections resulting from it, I wish to enforce upon your minds two general yet very beneficial conclusions: First, that acknowledging the divine Founder of your religion you receive His doctrines with docility and gratitude; secondly, that on every occasion you have recourse to God for light and grace, and in every undertaking seek to please Him. Admitting Him for the Author and Finisher of your faith, who created you and determined the measure and extent of your understanding, you will readily embrace whatever He proposes for your acceptance; and seeing that He has commisioned His apostles and their successors to preach and teach, even as He himself was so commissioned by His heavenly Father (John xx, 21), you will receive the articles of your faith through the medium of that living oracle, that speaking tribunal, His one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, which He has built upon a rock, and secured against the attempts of hell (Matt. xvi, 18); which He has commanded us to hear as Himself (Luke x, 16); and with which He has promised to abide forever (Matt. ult). Convinced that on Him alone you depend for success, as He alone can bestow it; sensible that He alone can change the waters of the "torrent in the way," the waters of "bitterness" into a delicious wine, the true wine that "cheereth the heart of man" (Eccl. xi), knowing that He hath "the words of eternal life" (John vi, 69), you will address yourselves to Him in every emergency, in every doubt and difficulty. Considering Him as your Creator, your Redeemer, your God, and your all, as your first beginning and last end, the source and completion of all your happiness, both in time and throughout eternity, your souls will be detached from all sublunary objects, your hearts and minds will soar aloft to the gates of heaven, there will you knock and pray to be admitted. And your loving Lord having promised that if "you ask you shall receive, if

you knock it shall be opened to you" (Matt. vii, 7), your petitions shall be heard, the gates of paradise shall at length be unfolded to receive you, and entering into the joys of your Lord, you shall possess the kingdom of His glory, and be happy with His elect for endless ages. Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

ON THE DUTY OF GOOD EXAMPLE

"Showing forth good things, not only in the sight of God, but also in the sight of all men."—Rom. xii, 7.

SYNOPSIS.—Several lessons taught in this epistle; necessity of good example not the least among them. This necessity founded on the law of God; on our baptismal vows; on the example of Christ. What does self-examination reveal? Special duty of all in authority to edify by good example and by avoidance of evil; the responsibility of superiors, parents, etc. The special evil fruits of bad example. The terrific accountability for the sins of others.

In this portion of St. Paul's Epistle to the Christians of Rome, which the Church of God has appointed for the lesson of this Sunday, we discover a pressing exhortation to the practise of fraternal charity, which, by applying it to ourselves we may turn to our spiritual instruction and advantage. He recommends to them, not merely on the grounds of terrestrial convenience, but upon Christian principles, to maintain among themselves unanimity of heart and sentiment, brotherly love and harmony; for the better support of which he exhorts to the practise of humility and condescension, and the performance of every tender office of benevolence and charity, even to the lowest of their brethren. Self-conceit, self-elevation, and arrogance, he strongly reprobates, and instead of revenge, which he zealously condemns, leaving judgment to the Lord, he urges the necessity of cultivating mutual affection, of subduing enmity by kindness, "giving food to our enemy, if he be hungry; if he be thirsty giving him to drink; for thus doing," says he, "thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" (v. 20). Meaning by this expression either that the experience of kindness in return for evil will subdue resentment, and kindle in the soul of our enemy the warmth of sensibility and gratitude; or else that our forbearance and resignation, if disregarded, will convict him before God, and bring down upon his head the punishment of Him who has said: "Revenge is mine, I will repay" (v. 19). But there is another duty incumbent on the Christian, which he recommends to them, and which it is my wish to enforce on the present occasion. I mean the duty of good example, which we owe to one another; "showing

forth," as the Apostle says, "good things, not only before God, but also before all men." I shall endeavor to show, in the first place, the importance and necessity of this duty; and, secondly, I shall explain to you how it is to be complied with.

Although, my brethren, the Christian ought to need no other motive in obeying the commandments of God than to know that such is the divine will, and although the hope of enjoying God forever ought alone to suffice to detach our hearts from ruinous gratifications; yet such is the weakness and folly of mankind that every additional motive is required to induce them to consult their own interest and happiness, to preserve them from running headlong into the abyss of misery. Charity, therefore, calls upon us to afford our brethren every aid which it is in our power to contribute to their welfare; we are required, as occasion may call upon us, to "reprove, intreat, rebuke with all patience and doctrine" (II Tim. iv, 3). But it may sometimes happen that neither solicitation, nor argument, nor reproof, will be attended to; there may be a time when men, hurried away by their passions, "will not endure sound doctrine"; it may very often happen that to give advice by oral communication is impossible; what is then to be done, my brethren? It is then that we are called upon to offer up our prayers for the sinner; and by the silent but impressive eloquence of good example to animate him to virtue. This we are bound to do at all times and in every circumstance of life; we are always required to withdraw from vice, and to encourage to sanctity by the influence and attraction of our good example. "Let your light shine before men," says our Saviour (Matt. v, 16), "that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." We are required to edify our neighbor in virtue of our baptismal engagements, as well as by the commands of our Saviour and Legislator. We were then pledged not only to be obedient to the divine law, but to diffuse the light of truth and holiness; to spread the sweet odor of charity by our exemplary conduct; and they who are placed in authority, who possess any superiority over others, who therefore stand, as I may say, upon an eminence, and to whom the eyes of others are directed, are more rigorously required to watch over all their actions, and so to regulate their exterior as to glorify their Father who is in heaven, and to lead his children toward their Father's house; holding up to them the torch of example, enlightening them that are in darkness, and directing their feet into the way of peace. If we too frequently

meet with Christians who are indifferent about the conduct of their neighbor, who can without a sigh observe his march toward perdition, and can unconcerned see him take the fatal plunge which will involve him in everlasting misery; we shall generally find that these persons, under the plea of avoiding all officious interference and meddling with the concerns of others, are only throwing a covering over their cold and frozen hearts; that they are in reality indifferent about their fellow-creatures; and as to his salvation, though they possibly might give a little of that which they can easily spare to relieve his corporeal necessities, yet they are quite insensible to the wants of his soul. These persons will be generally found very indifferent about the interests of God; and if you except their terrestrial interest, totally devoid of feeling for themselves. Instead of letting their light shine before men, they are ashamed of religion and virtue; they blush to let their good actions (if indeed they perform any) be seen; they hide their light beneath the bushel.

Make impartial inquiry, and satisfy yourselves whether your lives be such as to animate to virtue, or rather to withdraw from it. If the latter be the case, you are wanting both in the love of God and of your neighbor: I mean that Christian love of which Jesus Christ has given us an example in His love for us. But that you may the more easily discover how you have fulfilled this part of the precept of fraternal charity, I shall now lay before you some points in which you are particularly required to edify by your example.

Let it be observed that while all are bound to diffuse around them the sweet odor of edification, a more rigorous and indispensable obligation is laid upon those who are vested with authority, which demands their peculiar and constant care, to avoid everything which may be an obstacle in the way of those who are under their jurisdiction, or who look up to them as models by which they conceive what they may be allowed, or according to which they may be induced to regulate their own system of action. These must not only avoid the commission of that which is sinful, but must do good; and even let their good works be seen and witnessed by their inferiors and dependents, not from motives of vain-glory and ostentation (God forbid!) but to excite to virtue. How many are there in the situations of children, of servants, of dependents, who are accustomed to look up to their parents and superiors with a species of veneration which induces them to admire and imitate what they observe to be practised by them! They copy their manners and

deportment, and often ingraft upon their own character and conduct the vices and virtues of the persons under whose government they live: and how many owe their ruin both here and hereafter to the bad example of those under whom Providence has placed them, and from whom the Almighty Judge will require an account of their souls.

Though they may not have *immediately* urged them to the commission of sin, by *direct* persuasion, yet has not the undisguised profaneness, intemperance, injustice, immodesty, or other sins which they have witnessed, stimulated them to be guilty of similar offenses? Even though you may persuade yourselves that you are innocent of these flagrant enormities, into which your children, domestics or other dependents have waded, because you perpetuated not dreadful scandals before their eyes; yet did not irreligion, tepidity, indevotion, your neglect of the service of God, first weaken their attachment to virtue; enable them to undervalue and omit the means of salvation; without fear of reproach from you, who were as guilty as themselves? And freed by you from the *first* restraints, were they not emboldened to proceed to greater lengths, and at last proceeded to crimes from which, perhaps, you may be wholly exempt, but for which you prepared the way by your negligence in your Christian and religious duties? For if these be neglected, and the neglect connived at, the seeds are sown from which every immorality may be produced. You are required, then, to edify by your actions, so that you not only refrain from what is clearly evil, but do that which is calculated to lead to virtue. Your words must not only be free from all that can tend to sanction or recommend what is sinful, but must breathe a spirit of charity, modesty, and piety. Your deportment, your dress, your manners, when in public; the whole tenor of your conduct in private life, must be such as to exalt the cause of God, and make the practise of virtue endearing. Here, in the sacred place, your attendance should be punctual and regular, for the absence or late attendance of *one* individual is generally followed in its consequence by the absence or late attendance of another, and the more respectable such an individual may be in other points of view, the more seducing his example. Oh, let us beware of giving scandal, my brethren, and if Our Lord has commanded us *to let our light shine before men,* let not the works of darkness be exhibited in the face of day, spreading around contagion in the diffusion of immorality. "Wo to the world, because of scandal," says our

Redeemer (Matt. xviii, 7). And wo to them, as worse than mere corporal homicides, who by their persuasions, their influence and example, murder the souls of the innocent, making vain in their regard the Blood of the Son of God! "Wo to the world because of scandal; and he that shall scandalize one of these little ones," that is one of these innocents; and in respect to sin, of the simplicity of children, "it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. xviii, 16). The guilty shall perish, because he hath sinned; he shall be taken away in his iniquity, but the Lord will require his blood at the hand of his seducer. "Put not a stumbling block or a scandal in your brother's way," says St. Paul (Rom. xiv, 13), the sins which you occasion in others, may be considered as of worse consequence to you than those which you commit by your own personal act and deed, as they are in some sense irremediable; for your own immediate offenses you may repent, with sincere renunciation; but how many sins produced by bad example will never be thought on by the authors of them, nor ever be brought to light till they are manifested at the last day, only to receive their punishment. "From my hidden sins cleanse me, O Lord; and from those of others, spare thy servant" (Ps. xviii, 13), said holy David, and let this be also our frequent prayer. Let us ask forgiveness for whatever disedification we may have given to others, and let us resolve henceforth to promote the cause of God and religion by our good example. Like the first Christians, of whom it is written (Acts ii, 42) that "they were persevering in the doctrine of the apostles, and in the communication of the breaking of bread, and in prayer," let us by our assiduity in the service of God and the strict observance of every religious duty, promote the salvation of our neighbors, and ensure our own.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER THE EPIPHANY

ON AFFLICTIONS

"Behold a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the ship was covered with waves."—Matt. viii, 24.

SYNOPSIS.—This miracle shows the divinity of Christ. Man's life a sea of trouble; God's providence allows afflictions of all kinds to come to us. This is to prove us; to convert us; to show His love. How we should look upon affliction. Scripture is replete with proof of this point. The example of holy Job. The example of the Jews. Sentiments; gratitude and resignation.

Another miracle is here proposed to us by the Church of God, to confirm our faith of the divinity of Jesus, exhibiting Him as the ruler of the elements, performing on the sea, as well as upon the land, prodigies far surpassing the natural powers of man. We have lately seen Him changing water into wine at the marriage feast: we have observed Him healing the sick, in confirmation of his doctrine delivered to the multitude on the mountain; we now see Him commanding the winds and the sea. "Who then is he, for the winds and the sea obey him?" (v. 27).

My brethren, you indubitably believe and confess Him to be the Lord of glory; the God of heaven and earth. But let us endeavor to derive advantage from this incident; let us consider for what end our blessed Saviour permitted His disciples thus to be tossed by the storm on the sea of Tiberias, and why He reproved them for their want of faith, which suffered them to fear, even under His immediate protection. In them we discover the situation of the just in this life, sailing on the ocean of the world, which may well be compared to a boisterous sea, on which they are in perpetual danger of perishing. In fact, to what dangers are we not exposed in every age, and in every condition of life? Nothing can be of more importance to us, than to enter into the designs of Providence, which has decreed that the just shall be afflicted, and exposed to dangers, no less than the sinner, that the tribulations of this life should be the lot even of the choicest favorites of heaven. It is of consequence to all to be resigned to the appointments of almighty God, and to turn the afflictions to which human nature

is exposed to good account. I hope I shall contribute, in some degree, toward preparing those for patient suffering, who may not yet have felt the hand of God bearing upon them, and induce those to bend in calm resignation, and patient conformity to the divine Will, who are laboring and heavy laden with the sorrows and tribulations incident to mortality, by showing them why our loving Creator permits His creatures to be so variously afflicted in this vale of tears—this land of tribulation and misery.

It is an incontestable truth, which reason and religion irresistibly evince, that there is an overruling Providence, which disposes of all with infinite wisdom, and orders everything with a view to His own honor, and the real interests of His creatures. This being admitted, it follows as a necessary consequence, that all the physical evils to which human nature is liable are the effect of that same Providence, with reference to the divine honor, and the welfare of man, either in this world or the next. It is also observable, that of human afflictions some are internal, others external; some are so necessarily attached to us, as to be inseparable from our nature, so that affliction, sorrow, and pain are, in a certain degree, inevitable; no one is entirely secure, no situation wholly exempt from them.

These two principles established, it is not difficult to assign satisfactory reasons why the Deity permits His creatures to be afflicted in so many various manners. Let the just man be encouraged beneath the hand of God; let the sinner be converted from his evil ways, and he shall live; let all make proper use of the transient sorrows of present existence, and all will be benefited by them; let the just smile under tribulation, for it shall hereafter be productive of rich fruit; it shall bring forth great joy to their souls. "If they sow in tears, they shall reap in exultation" (Ps. cxxv, 5). It is true, the best friends of God have much to endure: and as the Apostle says (II Cor. vii, 5), "combats without, fears within assail them." You have, my brethren, to maintain an incessant war against your passions: many of you have to bear with poverty, want, and various humiliations. That Providence which you acknowledge and adore, in which alone you are consoled, that very Providence seems, on some occasions, to have almost forgotten you. Still learn, even under your lowest depression, to look up to God and to be comforted, knowing that "God comforteth the humble" (*Ibid.* v, 6); dispel all sentiments of despondence and learn that it is out of love for you that God afflicts you; that it is out

of tender regard for His children that your heavenly Father chastises you. He chastises you that He may prove your fidelity; that He may purify your souls from all affection for the things of the earth, and afford the means of expiating your offenses; that He may more closely attach you to Himself and His service; that He may increase your merit, and make your election sure.

When, therefore, you are assailed by temptation; when the waves of adversity and earthly sorrow beat against you, break not out into complaint and murmuring; be not depressed with immoderate sorrow, but look up to Him, who permits your trials, who, even in the midst of tribulation, stretches out His almighty hand to save those who put their trust in Him. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" (Matt. viii, 26); correspond with the intentions of your loving Lord, who observes your conflict; whose eye will "neither sleep nor slumber; who keepeth Israel" (Ps. cxx, 4). Correspond with His designs in your favor, nor lose the merit of suffering by impatience. "The furnace trieth the potter's vessels," says the wise man (Eccles. xxvii, 6), "and the trial of affliction the just man." Review the conduct of God toward His greatest friends and favorites, and you will find that He tries those most whom He best loves. "Because thou wast acceptable to God," said Raphael to Tobias (xii, 13), "it was necessary that temptation should try thee." Look at the holy man Job, a man "simple and upright, fearing God and departing from evil," and still keeping his innocence under every trial (Job ii, 3). Behold him stripped of all his worldly substance; his servants slain; his sons and daughters suddenly destroyed. Behold him precipitated from his high estate, covered with a "grievous ulcer, from the sole of his foot even to the top of his head," see him "sitting on a dunghill" (*Ibid.* 7), his friends, and even his own wife, upbraiding him as fruitlessly trusting in God and unprofitably patient.

It is often by the infliction of earthly misfortunes that the Almighty manifests His love in the most striking manner, and they who had profited nought by the goodness of heaven, displayed in the effusion of terrestrial blessings, have been roused from their dream of false happiness by sickness or distress, and by them led to God, and to salvation. How many owe their conversion to what was deemed the severest misfortune? How many of you have enjoyed health and security, and many comforts, the gifts of heaven, without evincing your gratitude to Him who bestowed

them: and lo! if earthly sorrow could awaken you to a sense of duty, and force you to turn to God, great indeed would be His goodness in visiting you with terrestrial affliction. The loss of a husband, a wife, a child, or a friend, has forced many to reflect, who had never seriously thought before; has drawn their hearts to a love of the Supreme good, which had long been fixed on earthly objects, unworthy of their affections. Disappointment or misfortune has opened the eyes of many to the interests of eternity, which had long been overlooked, amidst the delights of present gratification, and the enjoyment of present prosperity. A severe fit of illness has at once determined the vacillations of an irresolute mind, dispelled hesitation, fixed the inconstant, and opened their eyes to the vanity of pleasures, that can not be long enjoyed; of riches, that must soon be lost, and never can bestow content; of honor and fame, which are no more than a breath of air, that gives only an illusory satisfaction.

Yes, my brethren, it is certain that what men have considered their greatest misfortune has not unfrequently proved their greatest good; when, then, by the appointment or permission of God, affliction comes upon you, be not dejected: for by receiving it in a spirit of humility, resignation, and penance, it will be turned to good account. "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is very great in heaven" (Matt. v, 12). But if the visitations of God have purified and improved the righteous; have alarmed and roused the sinner to repentance, terrestrial tribulations may be traced to a God tenderly loving His creatures, and greatly desiring their real welfare and happiness. The inspirations of heaven, and the invitations of our Lord, are, in some way or other, experienced by all. The worldling, who looks no further than the present, is occasionally called upon, and pressed by his Maker to extend his view to eternity. The possessors of earthly grandeur, the slaves of vanity, may seem to enjoy unruffled prosperity, and pleasures unalloyed; yet God in His mercy to them, and that they may not be without the opportunity of reflecting, sometimes checks the current of their joys; embitters their pleasures, and in the midst of apparent content and gladness, while every afflicting idea seems far removed from their dwellings, they experience occasionally both interior and exterior crosses.

Why does God deal with them in this manner? Not precisely to punish their guilt. Alas! if they continue in it, a far greater

punishment awaits them; but He wishes to snatch them both from guilt and punishment; to save them by present tribulation from future endless misery; to inspire them with disgust for criminal pleasures, earthly joys, and affection for creatures; to force them, as it were, to turn to Him and happiness. Ah! sinners, this is your last resource; this is, if I may be allowed the expression, the last expedient which the goodness of God resorts to before He casts off His rebellious creatures. If you despise this effort of His goodness to save your souls, He may suffer the remainder of your days to flow smoothly on in the enjoyment of all that earth can furnish; but may prepare a hell for you, with unspeakable, inconceivable tortures, without end or alleviation, for eternity! If, indeed, proceeding in sin, in the violation of His commands, and the neglect of your duty, you still enjoy the accustomed prosperity of this world, I do not say to you "be glad," but "tremble." Nor do I wish you, in this case, the enjoyment of uninterrupted prosperity, lest it should serve to keep you from thinking on God, and eternity; but rather, let me wish that some infliction of heaven may be laid upon you; some terrestrial misfortune, which may compel you to break with the world, and tear you from its embraces forever. With the royal prophet, I say, "fill their faces with ignominy, and they shall seek thy name, O Lord" (Ps. lxxxii, 7).

When God wished to remind the Jewish people of their ingratitude and guilt; when He desired to snatch them from the ways of iniquity and perdition, He chastised them by inflicting some calamity upon them, and they opened their eyes to discover their sin, and were converted to Him. "When he slew them," says holy David (Ps. lxxvii, 34), "they sought him, and returned to him, and early in the morning they came to him." Wo then, to them who spend their days in mirth and prosperity, in laughter and joy, regardless of future bliss, and sorrow which shall never end! "Wo be to you who laugh now," says our blessed Lord, "for you shall mourn and weep" (Luke xi, 25). If so, my brethren, why should we be solicitous about present gratification and pleasure, which must soon terminate; why should any of you entertain ambition, or envy the seeming felicity of the great wealthy; seeing that their apparent joys are mingled with sorrows, and that the smiles which play upon their countenances are not infallible tokens of a heart at rest; seeing too, that laughter here is not the surest means of arriving at happiness hereafter. At the sight of that

prosperity which the wicked seem to enjoy, holy David confesses that he was almost induced to envy their lot, and forsake the service of God; but reflection and experience convinced him, that true peace and true happiness were only to be found in the practise of virtue and the paths of righteousness. "My feet," says he, "were almost moved; my steps had well nigh slipped: because I had zeal on occasion of the wicked, seeing the prosperity of sinners" (lxxii, 2). "They are not in the labor of men, neither shall they be scourged like other men" (5). "Therefore hath pride held them fast; they are covered with their iniquity and their wickedness" (6). "They have set their mouth against heaven, and their tongue hath passed through the earth" (9). "Behold these are sinners, yet abounding in the world they have obtained riches. And I said, then have I in vain justified my heart, and washed my hands among the innocent, and I have been scourged all the day, and my chastisement has been in the morning" (12). But considering the end of their false glories, and the judgments of God upon them, he says, that he discovered the wrath of the Lord falling upon them for their iniquities, and his eyes were opened to the wisdom of the righteous, and the folly of the unjust.

"I studied that I might know this thing: it is a labor in my sight, until I go into the sanctuary of God, and understand concerning their last end" (16). "But indeed for their deceit thou hast put it to them; when they were lifted up thou hast cast them down. How are they brought to desolation; they have suddenly ceased to be; they have perished by reason of their iniquity. As the dream of them that awake, O Lord, so in thy city thou shalt bring their image to nothing"(18). He concludes by acknowledging the goodness of God to him, in directing him in all his ways, and setting him in the paths of virtue and bliss. "Thou hast held me by my right hand, and by thy will thou hast conducted me; and with glory thou hast received me" (24). "For what have I in heaven; and besides thee what do I desire upon earth" (25). "Behold they that go far from thee shall perish; thou hast destroyed all them that are disloyal to thee" (27). "But it is good for me to stick close to my God, to put my hope in the Lord God" (28). Let us, my brethren, make the same conclusion: let us not envy the splendors of the great and opulent, neither let us repine under the tribulations which an omniscient and loving God is pleased to inflict upon us. If we are in the grace of God, affliction is a source of merit and the means of

purifying our souls from the dross of earthly affections: if, unfortunately, we are in sin, it is by affliction that we are most forcibly stimulated to a sense of our misery; by suffering we are enabled to appease the divine wrath. "It is through many tribulations that we must enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts xiv, 21). Let us not, therefore, murmur, like the Jews in the desert, lest, like them, we be excluded from the land of promise; but let us imitate those true Israelites, who being led captives to Babylon, appeased the anger of God by their submission, and merited to return again into the land of their fathers.

Let us be resigned to the will of God, and endeavor to sanctify our souls by means of which He ordains, as the best suited to our exigencies, the best calculated to preserve us from ruin. Do you know, my brethren, that you could withstand the dangers which attend on human prosperity? God knows, and He has not chosen to expose you to them. Seek them not: but in every affliction, remember that "our present tribulation, which is momentary and light, worketh for us above measure an eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. iv, 17).

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

THE IMPORTANCE OF SALVATION

"Why stand ye here all the day idle?"—Matt. xx, 6.

SYNOPSIS.—Interprctation of the parable. Application—We must work for the sanctification of our souls. Motives—Consideration of who and what and from whence we are; God's design in creating us. What must be done? We must will to do the work; must be ever alert; must pray for grace; must use the graces given; must avoid all occasion of sin; practise the virtues of our state of life. The reward.

Thus, my brethren, does the Almighty address us. For God Himself is understood as the owner of the vineyard, of whom Jesus Christ says (John xv, 1), "my father is the husbandman"; the vineyard is the soul of man, which each is required to cultivate and improve, and we are the laborers who are called upon to employ our time in works of justice, with the assurance of receiving an abundant reward if we acquit ourselves of the duty required of us. The different hours of the day, mentioned in the Gospel, may be explained, with reference to the remarkable epochs which occur between the beginning of this world and its final dissolution; in which view the last hour commences at the coming of Christ, and we, the Gentiles, are last of all called to work in the service of God. Till the arrival of this period the Gentiles had stood idle, ignorant of the duties of religion and the concerns of heaven, because no one had hired them; that is, no patriarch or prophet had hitherto announced to them the doctrines of salvation; no one had pointed out to them the ways of life and truth. By the several hours of the day allotted for labor may also be understood the different periods of human existence; youth, manhood, the period of declining life, and the decrepitude of old age: for all are not called by the light of heaven to the knowledge of truth and the light of grace in the early morn of life, but some at the sixth, some at the ninth, and others at the eleventh hour. In either application of the parable, we have been called by the goodness of God to labor in His vineyard; and if He has not delayed to call us till the close of the day, yet let us not on that account be slothful or murmur, but let us employ our time in

working out our salvation with fear and trembling, convinced with the great Apostle St. Paul that we can have no assurance of salvation so as to be free from fear. We have been called by the mercy of a loving God to the light of faith, to the knowledge of His doctrine; and if we either undervalue this His unmerited mercy, or abuse it by negligence; if we run not so as to obtain the prize; if we strive not for the mastery; we shall lose the reward promised to industry, while others will be honorably received by the Lord of the vineyard—admitted to an incorruptible crown. I mean this day to stimulate you to active endeavors in the business of salvation, by offering for your consideration some of the motives which press upon us to labor for the sanctification of our souls, and some of the means by which we may be successful.

If we consider who we are, what we are, and from whence we come; as also the intention of our Creator in giving us existence: we shall not hesitate in seeing sufficient reason for strenuous exertions in the cause of God and the salvation of our souls. Why did the mighty Lord of heaven and earth honor us with existence? Why did He select us, poor helpless beings as we are, and, if not ennobled by being destined to immortal life and glory, of no consideration whatever? In vain do poor mortals in despicable ostentation exalt themselves to fancied consequence, forgetful that having fluttered for the transient hour, having swelled and strutted, and made a noise, they disappear as to this world without being thought on, or even missed from amongst the number of human beings. When we see persons making attempts far beyond their powers; when we observe the boy affecting the manners of the man, we pity or we smile; and when we consider all the exertions of mankind, abstracted from their relation to eternity, we must be convinced that all their lofty notions of self-importance, all their pomp and labored magnificence, are more ridiculous and absurd than the self-sufficiency of the child, and best represented by those little insects which, with varied hues and rapid wing skim the surface of the pool, in constant motion while the sun continues to emit its genial rays, but expire—the short-lived flutterers of a summer's day—as soon as he withdraws his beams. It was the Almighty who produced us, nor was it without design that He made us what we are. From *nothing* He raised us to a state of *existence;* and besides the external form with which He clothed us, gifted each of us with a soul on which He stamped His own

image, making it capable of loving, serving and honoring Him; He made it *immortal,* that with Himself and in Himself it might enjoy never-ending happiness and glory. By the transgression of our first parent, we fell from the exalted state of pure nature in which man was originally formed; and the consequence was, amongst other calamities, that we became subject to various evil inclinations, that our passions aimed at ascendancy over reason, and a strong bias impelled us toward our ruin: it is therefore incumbent upon us, if we wish to be saved, to resist the evil propensities of our nature; to labor and exert ourselves with earnest application in eradicating from the soil of our hearts the thorns and briars that struggle there for growth; to cultivate the spiritual vineyards of our souls in which we are called to labor. This obligation is universal; the rich and the poor, the soldier and the mechanic, the prince and the beggar, are all equally subject to this important obligation. God Himself cannot dispense from the urgency of this duty; for in so doing He would be deficient in what He owes to Himself; for being the common Father of all, the supreme Lord of the universe, it is for Him to determine the employment of His subject creatures; and this employment He has fixed to be the sanctification of our souls, by which we give honor to Him as the absolute Master of all created beings. Defer not then this important concern, but, sensible of your duty and the momentous consequences which depend upon the performance or neglect of your duty, begin without hesitation or demur. Nor let the example and the success of those mentioned in the Gospel, who began to labor only at the eleventh hour, and yet received the same renumeration which was given to them who had toiled from early morn, and had borne the burden of the day and the heat, be an encouragement to slothful delay. For let it be remembered that they were not called until the eleventh hour; that they stood idle *because no one had hired them;* that they immediately obeyed the call and hastened to the vineyard. You have received the invitation of heaven, the command of God has been notified to you; whatever then be your hour, to you He says: "Go ye into my vineyard, and I will give you what shall be just" (v. 4). Obey His voice and labor henceforth in good earnest, lest you lose the recompense which God promises to those who labor in the cultivation of His vineyard; that is, in the sanctification of souls.

But what is to be performed in order to accomplish the will of God and to sanctify your souls? Is any material instrument or corporeal strength required? No, my brethren. All that is requisite is a promptitude of disposition to execute the work which is put into your hands, a fervent and unremitted application to heaven for interior grace, fortitude to resist the opposition of your enemies, and a faithful correspondence with the aids which God is ever ready to bestow. Pluck up and destroy every thorn and briar, every noxious plant; whatever can prevent the vine from bringing forth fruit in rich abundance. Let the soil be repeatedly labored and nourished; let the whole be strongly enclosed with a hedge or a wall, to secure it against the depredations of enemies. Yes, my friends, you must eradicate and destroy the noxious weeds of bad habits; pride, with its spreading roots, must be plucked out from your souls: the love of this vain world and all its contemptible follies, must be extirpated; every habit, every disposition and secret affection must be crushed and destroyed, that all may rise and flourish for God alone, and produce fruit agreeable in His sight. But this is not all; every virtue necessary in your situation must be cultivated and made productive; the soul must be strengthened, and, as it were, manured by frequent meditation on God, the source of all good; and continued supplications must be addressed to Him, that the dews of His spiritual graces may descend upon you and give fruitfulness to your otherwise barren soil. The wall must be built around it and unceasing vigilance must be observed, or the malice of your spiritual enemies will prevail against you; the wild beasts will make incursions and destroy the fruits of your labor. According to the expression of the Psalmist, "The boar out of the wood hath laid it waste, and a singular wild beast hath devoured it" (Ps. lxxix, 14).

You can not bring forth good fruit, without care and industry, and yet you act as if fruit pleasing to God would show itself and ripen without any solicitude or attention on your part; you call the work of salvation a work of difficulty; the mortifying of self-will and the subjection of your passions you represent as a task of immense hardship, and yet you scarcely give it a serious thought; you find that you can not eradicate your passions, or divest yourselves of your criminal habits, without offering violence to your propensities and crucifying the flesh; and you, nevertheless, proceed with the utmost unconcern. You know, and by sad

experience you have been taught to know, that the devil, your declared foe, never sleepeth nor slumbereth; that he is ever upon the watch, and the least occasion being given, he rushes to seize and to devour. Of this you are thoroughly convinced; and yet no precaution, no vigilance is employed to meet and defeat his wily stratagems. You say to God and to yourselves in the moments of occasional reflection, that you are desirous of avoiding sin, and will relinquish those works which are hateful to Him and ruinous to your souls; but those moments of serious thought once over, the same eager thirst for dangerous amusements and gratifications returns and is indulged; the same self-exposure to dangerous occasions is voluntarily incurred; and is it surprising that you do not conquer your passions? Is it wonderful that you relapse for ever and again into your former sins? Oh, no! Nature, if left to follow its own perverse bent, and exposed without caution and precaution to the suggestions and assaults of its inveterate enemies, will choose the track that leads to misery.

But you have been repeatedly warned; the parable of this day illustrates, and your own experience confirms it, that the affair of salvation demands assiduous labor; that "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and only the violent bear it away" (Matt. xi, 12). This moment then be aroused to energy; shake off the slumbers of supine indolence. "Lo! the kingdom of God is within you," says our Lord—neglect it not. Let that sentence of your Saviour ever resound in your ears and operate on your hearts. "What doth it profit a man if he gain, etc. . . . or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. xvi, 26). Health, riches, pleasures, and every earthly joy die away and perish forever; but the soul survives them all, and according to its deserts it enters into a life of bliss or torment never to have an end. Labor then, my brethren, for the bliss and glory that shall endure forever. Cheaply are they purchased by transient labor, which is alleviated by the grace of God, and leads to the possession of Him in eternal felicity. Amen.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

ON HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

"The seed is the word of God."—Luke viii, 11.

SYNOPSIS.—The parable and its setting. Refers not only to the external but also to the interior hearing of the word of God. Refers, then, to the countless actual graces continuously given by God through the merits of Jesus. Many have felt but rejected these inspirations. Obstacles to the interior word of God: First, dissipation of mind and heart; second, callousness and stupidity with regard to spiritual things; third, love of the world, its riches and pleasures. Helps to the hearing of God's voice in the soul: First, watchfulness; second, patience and fortitude. Love of God is the foundation for success. The reward.

In the Gospel I have just read, my brethren, you discover the loving goodness of your Redeemer, and the infinite pains He took in giving instruction. In the towns and villages, in the open country and on the seashore, He preached the kingdom of God and salvation to man. While employed in reclaiming the vicious, informing the ignorant and communicating blessings to all, it happened that a great concourse of people flocked to Him from the neighboring town, and to them He addressed the parable you have just heard. To impress His hearers with a sense of the importance of what had been spoken to them, He concludes with that significant expression: "Let him that hath ears to hear, hear." But what is the seed of which our Lord speaks in the parable? He has Himself informed us that it is the word of God. But is it only the written word of God contained in the sacred Scriptures, or the word delivered to you by His appointed ministers and addressed to your external hearing? No, my friends; it is moreover and principally the interior word of God, addressed to our hearts and understandings, inviting some to forsake the ways of doubt, perplexity and error; pressing and soliciting others to live according to that holy faith to which He has gratuitously called them. It is those beneficient illustrations of divine grace, those supernatural lights which have so often beamed upon your minds, and irresistibly convinced you of the vanity of earthly things and the solidity of celestial goods; which urge you to abandon the one and to seek the other; which disclose to you the goodness of your

God, His unbounded perfections, and the beauty of the humanity of His Son Christ Jesus; those favorable lights which discover to you the evil you are to avoid and the good you are to follow; it is the cause of those pious sentiments and affections arising from that disgust of the world which God Himself inspires; of those emotions which lead to a life of virtue. But oh, how greatly is this inward word of God neglected! and how fatal is the neglect! Let me this day persuade you to cherish and obey this interior word speaking in secret to your souls; and let me show you what it is that so often renders these silent calls and admonitions of the Almighty inefficacious in your regard.

These internal secret communications, my brethren, are no other than the *actual* grace of God, which is a certain interior aid, transiently impressed upon the understanding and the will, by which those powers of the soul, insufficient as they are of themselves, are enabled to produce supernatural acts, by which justice or increase of justice is acquired. How valuable and important are these inspirations of heaven! How highly are we exalted and honored when God Himself deigns thus to speak to our souls, and to aid them by His grace! From God Himself does the honor and the favor proceed, and from His Son Jesus Christ, who has merited it by His passion. The price of purchase is the blood of a God made man! Its virtue and efficacy are such as to make us agreeable to God, objects of complacency in His sight! It is a fire which purifies, enlightens and consumes us, and by means of it we are enabled to merit an immortal crown every moment of our lives. Has not the Lord frequently and abundantly imparted this celestial seed to our souls? In every age of life, every day and almost every hour of the day, has not His divine grace been sensibly experienced, awakening in your souls a sense of His goodness, and of your duty; inspiring you with a horror for the monster *sin,* and a dread of those punishments which are reserved for those who commit it. Even those, whose situation in life has been the farthest removed from the opportunities of instruction, or the knowledge of His saving faith, have, at some period or other, been favored with the means of acquiring a knowledge of the truth; have been stimulated by the cry of conscience; have been solicited by the sweet encouragement and invitations of heaven, to forsake their evil ways and turn to God and peace. If neglected by parental care; if wholly abandoned to the sway of the passions;

if brought up unmindful of God and of salvation, instructed only in business and concerns of the present life, still something has occurred, some event has happened, perhaps beyond all human calculation or conjecture, which has opened to them the necessary means of instruction, and brought them to the path of duty and religion. If the graces of God have been disregarded; if the means He has provided have been neglected; if you have been moved and half determined, and have then looked back upon the pleasures of the world and past enjoyments; if then you have hesitated, and just advanced and then recoiled, and at length suffered yourselves to be drawn back to the way of vanity and sinful enjoyment; if having rejected the graces of heaven, you now abandon yourselves to forgetfulness of His mercies, and to cruel, fatal ingratitude, yours is the fault, and yours will be the just punishment of folly and ingratitude. How often, in the moments of serious reflection, has He brought to your view the enormity of your guilt and alarmed you with fears of His justice! Then have you felt a terror at the contemplation of your wretched state; dismayed at the prospect of eternity, perhaps you then resolved to leave the broad road of vice, and, notwithstanding every difficulty, to enter with courage on the narrow road that leads to life, and by steady perseverance to obtain the crown of immortal glory. Thousands have felt these inspirations, have received them on the surface of their souls, but have never suffered them to sink deep into their hearts, and therefore, having "believed for a while, in the time of temptation have fallen away." Some new object has succeeded in obliterating the impressions of grace; the clouds of adversity have been dispersed; the serious resolutions they had then formed have disappeared in the sunshine of prosperous fortune, and their fickle minds have given up the plan of wholesome reform.

Has this never been the case with any of you, my friends? Have you never, after feeling within you the powerful operations of divine grace, and for the moment yielding to them, again returned to your accustomed pursuits and evil habits, while the reiterated invitations of your loving Father have each time been received with increased coldness, and the work of your conversion is, at this moment, as remote as ever; perhaps more remote, as being more difficult than formerly. Oh, unhappy Christian, why should you shut your eyes against the light? Why stifle those kind emotions,

the effect of God's grace? What a neglect of His goodness, forbearance and mercy? Can man, possessed of reason, that noble gift of heaven, so unaccountably pervert the valuable prerogative of his nature, and lose the prize because he will not stretch out his hands to receive it? Dear Christian brethren, be sensible of your folly and guilt in thus despising the bounty of God, and of His Son Jesus Christ! Endeavor henceforth to repair your past misconduct; and if this day you shall hear the voice of your God, even by my feeble organ, harden not your hearts, but attend to me while I unfold to you the general obstacles which present themselves to those who attempt this spiritual renovation, and learn in what manner you are to correspond with the merciful calls of your Lord and Saviour, in order to overcome them.

The obstacles which oppose the *interior* word of God speaking to the hearts of men, are usually of the same nature as those which obstruct His *exterior* word addressed to the senses by exhortations, good books, and the like, and are in the same manner represented by the ground mentioned in the Gospel as barren and unproductive. The first obstacle is that dissipation of mind and of heart which refuses to cherish instruction and inspiration. The senses, which are the avenues to the soul, and the soul itself, are as a high road, continually open to passengers of every description: purposes of amendment, pious resolutions of attending to the one thing necessary, sentiments of love, gratitude, and obedience to God occasionally make their appearance, but are speedily trampled under foot by the crowds of promiscuous visitors, who continually frequent this open thoroughfare. Ah! how shall attention be given to the secret workings of the Holy Spirit; to the still, small voice of God, when the ear is given without reserve to the loud clamor of the passions, the noise of the world, and the vociferations of creatures! These, says St. Bernard, keep up a powerful and continual sound, but the voice of God is not to be heard in the chorus.

The second obstacle is generally the consequence of the first. When dissipation and vanity have been long indulged, the heart becomes callous against the impressions of divine grace and the calls of heaven. The understanding, enslaved to the passions, is obscured by the errors and false maxims of the world, which are admitted without examination, and adopted without reflection. Then, if the light shine upon them, "it shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not" (John i, 5). "They love

darkness rather than light . . . for every one that doeth evil hateth the light" (*Ibid.* iii, 20). The word of God is to them a paradox, an enigma, which they hear without understanding; they resist His calls and invitations, without ever lamenting their misfortune; they labor in the accumulation of their own misery, and thus the prophecy of Isaiah is accomplished in them; for "seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not; neither do they understand" (Matt. xiii, 13).

The third obstacle to the operation of divine grace in the souls of men, is the fatal love of riches and pleasures, which, rising with hasty growth, chokes the seed of God's heavenly word. At first the poor deluded victims feel a hesitation and fear; they feel and almost acknowledge that they are not proceeding in a line of conduct agreeable to God and consistent with duty, and seem to wish they could prevail on themselves to follow the dictates of reason, religion and conscience. If, perchance, they experience a kind of disrelish for the vanities of life, occasioned by some misfortune or disappointment, they improve not the favorable opportunity, they correspond not with the call of God, they suffer the thorns to grow. Instead of instantly endeavoring to eradicate from the heart the particular obstacle to the grace of God, they expose themselves to dangers which have been repeatedly fatal; they can not prevail on themselves to relinquish pleasures which have frequently proved destructive to virtue; they still seek that conversation which has often been the occasion of slander, backbiting and envy; the injury they have done to their neighbor, in this way, they refuse to repair; the mammon of this world they will not resign, even to restore to their neighbor what is his own; in short, interest and pleasure keep their wonted ascendancy; the voice of religion, of conscience and of God, is stifled or hushed to silence, and present gratification triumphs over the invitations of future happiness, the glittering follies of time over the endless glories of eternity.

Own the truth, oh, you who still keep at a distance from duty and from God; has not this been precisely your case? Give glory to God, acknowledge that nothing has been wanting on His part, that He has continually invited and urged you to virtue, and you have refused to comply with His grace, preferring self-will and self-love to the inspirations of heaven? Unworthy preference! Oh, cease to withstand the voice of God, which still calls to you to

withdraw from vanity and to seek repose where alone it is to be found. Henceforward make a proper use of His grace, let your hearts be that good soil yielding fruit a hundredfold.

For this two things are especially required: a constant watchfulness over yourselves and continued attention to what the Lord shall communicate to the interior of your souls, to the light which He shall vouchsafe to impart to your understandings. Let the young, imitating the youthful Samuel, say to Him: "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth" (I Kings iii, 10). Let the more advanced in age imitate the blessed Virgin, who diligently noticed the words and actions of our Saviour, "keeping all those things carefully in her heart" (Luke ii, 51). Let all resolve, after the example of holy David, to receive the word and keep it, saying with him: "I will hear what the Lord shall speak in me" (Ps. lxxxiv, 9). Secondly, patience is necessary and Christian fortitude, to bear and submit to whatever shall be prepared for you to encounter; and it will be requisite that you offer a holy violence to yourselves, without which the kingdom of heaven is not to be carried. Whoever imagines that eternal happiness is to be obtained without effort or struggle, has never yet reflected on the subject, has never thought on the express declarations of unerring truth; and whoever leaves it, as he imagines, to chance, is his own deceiver, and shall inevitably meet the fate of the indolent and unprofitable servant. God is merciful and will receive the humble penitent, but God is just and will cast off forever those who despise His mercies. Of all who are suffering the weight of His indignation in the abyss of misery, none there are who did not experience the goodness and the grace of God, and who did not despise them; none who did not feel some good desires, the effect of His love, but rendered them inefficacious by their negligence in suppressing or disregarding them.

Expose not yourselves, my dear friends, who are called to immortal glory, expose not yourselves to that dismal sentence which shall doom the sinner to spend an eternity in fruitless sorrow and bitterest self-execration. Follow the attraction of grace, obey the call of heaven, which solicits you to your own undoubted interest. Be not deterred by the representations of self-love; *self* is an enemy; hear him not, but hearken rather to Him who promises to those who take up His yoke that, notwithstanding the weakness and corruption of nature, it shall be found sweet and

the burthen of His law light. Love makes all things easy that are undergone for the sake of those we love; and when God, who alone can satisfy the desires of the soul, is the object of affection, He recompenses His servants, even here below, for all that is suffered for His sake, with such abundance of consolations, such assurances of superior joys hereafter, as to make them exclaim with St. Paul, that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us (Rom. viii, 18). Give ear to those, who from their abodes of glory encourage you to follow their example. The clouds, say they, are now dispersed, the winter is past, the storms and the floods are over; peace, and joy, and glory, are our portion forever. Arise, then, come to us, come to your God who invites and presses you to seek what is for your good; to enjoy the happiness which He has prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Oh, He is loving and merciful, and of His mercies there is no end. He will give you every good for time and for eternity; for He will reward you with Himself.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

ON DEATH

"Remember, man, that thou art dust, and into dust thou shalt return."—Gen. iii, 9.

SYNOPSIS.—The spirit of Lent. Humility and penance the special virtues of the holy season. Meditation on death the most valuable aid at the present moment. This meditation teaches the emptiness, the vanity and the instability of sinful gratifications; tells us likewise of the chastisements reserved by God for all who die in mortal sin; of their severity and of their eternity. The certainty, the nearness, the physical sequela of death. The good resolutions that should animate us at the beginning of Lent.

The Church of Christ, ever studious of the welfare of her offspring, omits no means, no endeavor by which her children may be withdrawn from sin and led to penance. Approaching now to the penitential time of Lent, and entering upon that solemn fast which the concurring testimony of every age since the time of the Apostles evinces to have been instituted by them, we are called this day to contemplate our loving Redeemer going up from Galilee to Jerusalem, in order to accomplish "all things that were written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man" (Luke xviii, 31). We are invited to a consideration of the sufferings of our Divine Master and model, to animate us cheerfully to submit to the rigors of corporeal mortification; to unite our sufferings with His, "for he bore our infirmities and carried our sorrows; . . . . he was wounded for our iniquities; he was bruised for our sins; . . . and by his bruises we are healed" (Isaiah liii, 4). And on the first day of the great annual apostolic fast, we are called to submit to an humiliating ceremony, which if well attended to, is calculated to prepare us for the work of penance, to spend the time of Lent in weeping and mourning for our sins. Receiving the ashes on our foreheads, we are addressed in the same words which the Almighty used to our first parent when He denounced against him the sentence of malediction incurred by sensuality and disobedience. It was by the indulgence of the sensual appetite that sin originally came into the world, by the indulgence of sensuality it is perpetuated, and it is by mortify-

ing and restraining sensuality that we are to return to God. While we are reminded of our fallen state by the words pronounced at the time we receive the ashes, we are also reminded of the consequences of our fall: "Remember, man," etc.; and if we allow the humiliating admonition to make a just impression upon our hearts as well as upon our minds, our affections and desires will be taken off from the deceitful and pernicious allurements of this cheating world, and turned to objects of eternal moment. "In all thy works," says the wise men, "remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin" (Ecclus. vii, ult, v.). I shall endeavor to convince you, my brethren, that nothing tends more effectually to preserve us from the commission of sin than the frequent meditation upon death; and consequently that nothing can more powerfully conduce to our spending the approaching season of penance in a suitable manner, nothing more securely lead us to sanctity of life at all times and in all seasons.

Whatever tends to check the impetuous ardour of our passions must necessarily tend to preserve us from sin; since it is by hearkening to their delusive sophistry, and yielding to their solicitations, that we transgress the commandments of God and involve ourselves in real misery. Now there is, most certainly, nothing which so evidently exposes the deceptions, so successfully restrains the violence of passion, as a conviction of the vanity and instability of those gratifications which passion solicits and a knowledge of the dreadful chastisements which are incurred by those gratifications; and this conviction is efficaciously produced by frequently placing before our eyes that awful hour in which we shall be conveyed from this world and all that excites either hope or fear, to an untried region, in which our lot once determined will be unalterably fixed for never-ending ages.

Would we wish to be persuaded of the vanity of every earthly satisfaction and fleeting pleasures? Let us fairly inquire what they are and what they yield. Let us ask those envied mortals, who have passed their days in uninterrupted gratification of their wishes and desires; who have never been induced to restrain or govern a single wish which they fancied would give pleasure by its indulgence; who have obsequiously yielded to every craving of their passions; and who, if unrestrained acquiescence in the solicitations of inordinate appetite could bestow real pleasure, have reveled in delight; let us ask these; but, my brethren, let us make the

inquiry when the awful moment of approaching dissolution convinces them that their end is near at hand; placed at their bedside, when they have no longer hope of future indulgence, let us inquire respecting the past; let us beg to be informed what fruits they have reaped from the enjoyments of earthly satisfaction; what they now feel, or what content they have ever felt in sensual joys and pleasures. Ah! they will now reply that they never experienced real delight; that true content of mind they never knew; that remorse and dread were the fruits of all their supposed joys; that the approach of death gives them time to look back upon what they have been doing, and that they can discover nothing worthy their pursuit or love. They now discover the vanity of all sublunary things, the emptiness of every earthly concern. In the words of the wise man they will exclaim: "We have erred from the way of truth, and the light of justice hath not shined unto us, and the sun of understanding hath not risen upon us. We wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity . . . but the way of the Lord we have not known . What hath pride profited us? or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away like a shadow . . . we have been able to show no mark of virtue; but are consumed in our wickedness" (Wisd. v. 6, etc.). The ambitious will inform us that they now discover that the path of true glory is alone the path of virtue; that honor and greatness are seated in real magnificence beyond the grave; that they have been toiling to no purpose in fruitless, no less than painful exertions. "We have walked through hard ways; but the way of the Lord we have not known" (*Ibid.* v. 7). The voluptuary will acknowledge with confusion that wallowing in sensual pleasures, and aspiring to naught above corporeal delights, he forgot his immortal soul—he degraded his nobler principal, his better part; neglected his exalted destiny; and is now convinced, by a melancholy experience, that every earthly gratification is unworthy the affections of a being formed for heavenly joys and eternal happiness. "Vanity of vanities, and all things are vanity" (Eccles. xii, 8), will exclaim every follower of the world in those important moments, when things of the earth are seen as they are, without prejudice or partiality, and when the voice of truth is heard, unbiassed by inclination, undisguised by artifice.

As to the instability of all that passion recommends, we know

that every earthly enjoyment is momentary and evanescent, that every pleasure of life disappoints expectation, is so short as to be forgotten almost in the moments of fruition; and when past leaves nothing behind save only too often the excruciating remembrance of guilt, and dread remorse at the recollection of peace and innocence bartered for a mere shadow of delight, and of virtue sacrificed at the shrine of illicit gratification. Yes, my brethren, bitter is the cup of sensual pleasure, though its appearance invite and its first taste seem sweet; soon, ah! soon it is found to contain a hateful bitter; soon is it seen that beneath the surface lies a noxious sediment which communicates itself in pernicious commixture and remains when all that seemed so sweet is perceived no longer. Unhappy, my brethren, are all the children of this world! "the way of peace they have not known" (Ps. xiii, 3); "but tribulation and anguish upon the soul of every man that worketh evil" (Rom. ii, 9). It is by meditating upon death, which is to introduce you into a life where folly shall deceive no longer, that you will discover the emptiness, the vanity and instability of every earthly satisfaction, and be convinced that only to be virtuous is to be happy.

But besides the cruel anguish which criminal indulgence and the gratification of passion bring with them in life, faith presents to us infinitely severer chastisements in the life to come, lamentation and wo without end or mitigation. We know that as all which pleases in this world passes away with time, so when time shall be no more, the reign of eternity commences, and whatever has a beginning in eternity can never have an end. The punishments reserved for guilt, no less than the rewards prepared for virtue, shall continue in co-existence with the independent, self-existing, eternal Deity, who shall inflict the one and confer the other. Let the impious glory in present prosperity; let them drown remorse in insensibility and extinguish reason, that they may stifle reflection; at length the moment must arrive when they will be compelled to see the folly of their proceedings, and will foresee all the dreadful consequences of vice. Struck by the hand of their much injured Lord; stretched out on the bed of sickness, while ebbing life convinces them that this world is on the point of finishing in their regard, they will then look back upon those scenes which were once esteemed so happy with horror and surprise; the restrospect will furnish no hope; the prospect of futurity will inspire consternation and black despair. The hope of the

wicked is as dust which is blown away with the wind, and as a thin froth which is dispersed by the storm, and as a smoke that is scattered abroad by the breeze, and as the remembrance of a guest of one day who passeth by. "But the just shall live for evermore, and their reward is with the Lord and the care of them in the Most High" (Wisd. v, 15).

These reflections, provided you impress them upon your minds and are careful frequently to renew them, will dispose you to pass the holy season of Lent with real profit; will powerfully help you to avoid sin, and at all times and seasons tend to promote your sanctification. With this view enter upon the fast of Lent, in sentiments of humility and penance; nor can anything inspire these sentiments with greater effect than the meditation upon death, which the ceremony of Ash Wednesday necessarily brings to your mind. "Remember that you are dust and must shortly return to dust," and you will be humble; you will lose your attachment to those things which are craved for by "the body of this death" (Rom. vii, 24), you will labor to subject the "law in your members, fighting against the law of your mind and captivating you in the law of sin" (*Ibid.*); and to subdue this law of sin you will willingly embrace the practises of mortification and self-denial, which alone can subdue or restrain it. Let each of us say to himself: "It is appointed unto men once to die" (Heb. ix, 27). Death can not be very far removed from me; then shall this body which I now indulge and pamper return to the earth; this flesh which now draws me so often into sin become the feast of filthy worms. Oh, vile body and proud flesh, shall I encourage your demands, by which my soul will be plunged into endless misery, and you also participate hereafter in its pains and anguish? If I comply with your solicitations I am lost forever, both soul and body; if I let the time of mercy, the acceptable time, pass away without availing myself of the goodness of my God, who allows me this time that I may redeem the past, have I not reason to expect a miserable death, to be followed by a miserable eternity! Oh, then I will embrace His proffered mercy; I will begin, I will delay no longer. Henceforth I will own my pride, which I have endeavored to excuse and palliate; I will labor to eradicate this root of all my evils. Vanity, farewell; I now renounce thee with deliberate reflection forever and ever; self-love, thou cursed idol which hast received all my worship, I abjure thee; I will turn from thee, profane flesh, to

which I am sacrificing my immortal soul. Whatever I have acquired by unjust means I will resign now, while I can do it with advantage to myself, lest death should tear it from me in spite of resistance, and hell should be my portion forever. I will look into my soul and search into all its recesses; not, as heretofore, with partiality, shutting my eyes against my defects, wishing to be deceived and striving to be my own deceiver; but I will invoke the light of the Holy Ghost; will do my utmost to discover all my faults, particularly my ruling passion, which is the main source of all my prevarications and perversity; I will now consult the guardian of my soul, the conductor of my conscience; I will harken to what my friends shall advise in their zeal for my welfare, and even my enemies shall be made to afford help by discovering to me failings, which the partial eye of friendship could not observe. In a word, I will imitate my Lord and Master, I will take up my cross and follow Him who, being innocent, died to expiate my offenses.

My beloved friends, these reflections and resolutions, frequently encouraged and attended to, will produce the most salutary effects; will fill your souls with peace which the world can not give, with hope and comfort. Receiving the ashes on your heads, approach in spirit to the moments of your dissolution; consider yourselves as submitting to the decree of the Most High, as bowing to His appointment and, as it were, by anticipation yielding to the superiority of mother earth, who shall again receive you into her womb, to bring you forth in her second parturition immortal. The time will come, nor is it far distant, when we shall be laid, our mortal part at least, which we so much cherish and indulge, in the cold earth, soon to be forgotten, and to be succeeded by another race of mortals, as we have succeeded to those who have gone before us. As we tread the churchyard, the repository of the dead for ages, how much of the earth on which we walk was once animated! The fields and roads over which you pass have been heretofore fattened with the blood of the slain; the surrounding country has been the theater on which adverse armies have met in sanguinary conflict; and within the space of a single mile from this spot was sacrificed the collected force of the whole island, by the unpitying cruelty of savage invaders. At every step we may tread where heroes once renowned in war, men famous in their generation, have spilt their blood and fallen in battle. Their bodies have been

committed to the grave, and have mingled with the earth; their fame has perished; they are now unnoticed and unknown; and even their bones have crumbled into dust.

"Remember, man," etc.; descend in spirit into the tombs of the mighty dead, and there converse with their ashes. They will cry out to you, while pompous panegyrics and fulsome inscriptions decorate their monuments; "Vanity of vanities," etc.; and while they are extolled where they are no more, their souls are tortured in hell, where they are doomed to live forever. Oh, my friends, let these thoughts sink deep into your minds and never be obliterated; recall them to mind every day of Lent and every day of your remaining life; they will help to restrain the fury of your passions, humble your pride, and cause you to embrace penance with alacrity and joy as the surest seed of future happiness and glory. Remember your last end, that you may be preserved from sin and guarded against temptation; when difficulties alarm and terrify you, add to the thought of your own death the remembrance of the painful agonies of your expiring Redeemer; this will make the bitter cup of sufferings sweet to you, will animate you to atone for your sins, and when your bodies shall sink in death and return to dust, this will prepare your souls to appear before your Judge, and obtain for you a happy and eternal union with your Father and your God.

FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

ON REPENTANCE

"When he had fasted forty days, he was afterwards hungry.—Matt. iv, 1.

SYNOPSIS.—The example of Jesus, who fasted for our sakes. Repentance necessary for the sinner. Now is the acceptable time. Object of repentance—to gain eternal life. We are helped in this by the prayers of the Church and the supplications of the holy ones of earth. Means; First, retirement from the world, with its vanities and pleasures, as far as duty will allow; second, prayer—continuous, fervent prayer; third, bodily mortification and mortification of the spirit; fourth, assiduous resistance to the attacks of the devil. The example of Christ will help us in all these means. Resolutions. Reward.

A remarkable incident in the life of our Redeemer is this day offered to our consideration. Having received Baptism at the hands of John, He is conducted by the Holy Spirit into a gloomy desert, the resort of savage beasts, as we are informed by St. Mark (i, 13); here He continued forty days and as many nights, without taking any corporeal nourishment, and was afterward tempted by the devil. As fasting is a powerful mean of making atonement to God for our sins, of subduing the flesh, together with its passions and concupiscences; as it brings us nearer to God and gives spiritual force and energy to the spirit, in proportion as the flesh is brought into subjection; as it enables the soul to aspire after God by purer converse, by breaking the bonds of earthly attachment, the Church of God, in order to encourage her children to embrace with alacrity so beneficial a practise, places before our eyes the example of our Lord Himself doing penance for the sins of man, by rigorous fasting and fervent prayer. Now, then, is "the acceptable time"; the period is arrived which, so far from overcasting our hearts with gloom and melancholy, ought to fill them with holy joy, from the consideration of our being now, in a particular manner, united with the whole Church of God upon earth, in abridging the powers of our infernal foe, in breaking down the barriers between our souls and divine grace, in offering violence to heaven by an assault pleasing to the King of Heaven, our Lord and God. "Now is the acceptable time, and these are the days of salvation"; let us not suffer them to glide away unac-

ceptable to God, unprofitable to ourselves. Let us not delay our conversion, "lest we die in our sins." This menace our Saviour made to the Jews, and He makes it to all who proceed in sin, either hardened against His grace or negligent in employing it. I mean to offer you some cogent motives for immediate repentance and some effectual means by which you may give permanence and stability to your conversion.

If the accomplishment of our salvation be accounted of real value; if to gain immortal glory and to escape eternal torments be objects worthy our endeavor, the expediency of immediately effecting these great purposes must be acknowledged; and the sinner whose life depends on the will of that God whom he has so repeatedly provoked by his crimes, should rejoice that the time of repentance is allowed him, and avail himself of it without a moment's delay. Our existence is in the hands of God; our everlasting happiness or misery depends upon our correspondence with His graces; if we die in our sins, repentance is no longer possible, mercy no longer attainable. Rage and anguish and despair, with every curse which folly and obstinacy have merited, will tear the heart of the obdurate sinner throughout eternity. The means which he possessed of gaining heaven will then be seen to be the most easy to be acquired and exercised; but he has thrown them away and his loss is irreparable. Now, then, is "the acceptable time"; the present is yours, my brethren, and by employing it well, you may escape the gnawings of fell remorse and endless desperation. It is particularly at the present season of humiliation and penance, during the forty days of Lent, that you may recover the favor of your great Lord, the Sovereign of Heaven. These forty days may be made days of future, everlasting joy, "days of salvation." It is at this time that the Almighty gives especial graces to the sinner. He beholds His faithful servants prostrate before Him and supplicating for themselves and their brethren; He hears the voice of His ministers crying out to Him between the vestibule and the altar, "Spare, O Lord, spare thy people"; He views His whole Church with united efforts putting to flight the powers of darkness; the tears, the sighs, the bodily austerities of His friends plead not in vain.

It is not what we perform, miserable sinners, that ascends before the throne of God and draws down the mercies of the Lord upon His rebellious people. Let us not think that our pitiful exertions,

of which, alas! we make so much account, can avert the vengeance of the Most High from the heads of guilty nations and individuals; no, it is to be attributed to the prayers and fasts of many who, amidst a variety of temptation, serve their God in purity of heart, and who, amidst the too general defection of those who enjoy the happiness of true religion, still remain untainted by the pestiferous breath of a corrupt world; still refuse to bend their knee to Baal; to the fervent supplications of those devout Christians of either sex, those angels in human form who, in pure contempt of the world and for the love of God, have relinquished all its seducements, and devoted their lives to perpetual solitude; who have overcome the flesh by practising austerities, at which our delicacy shudders even in the recital; and have subdued the devil by a humble adherence to the Cross of Jesus, which is never absent from their minds and hearts; these illustrious combatants in the service of the great King, these magnanimous spirits of whom the world is not worthy, unite their sufferings with those of their Head, to prevent the anger of God from bursting in destructive thunder upon a guilty race who, with sins like those of Sodom and Gomorra, provoke the majesty of heaven. Oh! join with them, my brethren, now while it is in your power; your God invites you; His hand is open to bestow His graces and to receive your repentance. Delay not; time passes away with rapid flight; the arrows of death fly thick around you concealed from mortal eye—he takes his aim and draws his bow; thousands are falling by the hand of this universal destroyer; wait not, then, till unexpectedly you find yourself struck down and borne away into his dread dominions. Delay not even till the end of this Lent, but now, with all the fervor of your souls, embrace the means which God has afforded you, in order to obtain His mercy and to be reconciled to Him. Delay will increase your difficulties; new and unforeseen obstacles will arise; sinful habits will acquire additional strength; the grace of God will be diminished; the devil will obtain increase of influence; a thousand obstacles may arise to occasion fresh delay, and the Almighty, fatigued with your reiterated delays, may cut you off suddenly and forever.

Would you wish to turn to God with sincerity and effect? Turn your eyes to Jesus Christ in the desert; His example will instruct you in what is necessary to constitute a true conversion. He retires from the world; He prays, He fasts, and resists the temptations

of the devil. When you occasionally weigh in your minds the importance of salvation, a thousand obstacles start up and make it appear extremely difficult, if not quite impossible, to effect your conversion. Your attachment to the world and long accustomed habits keep you back; your disuse and dislike of prayer, your love of ease, and the suggestions of the tempter withhold you from beginning, and you put away the conviction that to save your souls a reformation of conduct is absolutely necessary, by a fond assurance that it shall as certainly be attended to at some more convenient but still distant period. The difficulties I have mentioned have hitherto prevented your endeavors, and if you wish to return to God you must surmount them, whether that be done now or at a future time. The present time you have allowed is all that you can depend upon, and the means you must employ are those pointed out to you in the example of your Saviour. You must retire from the world; prayer and holy meditation must be regularly and assiduously practised; the flesh must be mortified and the assaults of Satan vigorously resisted. Yes, my brethren, if you wish to avoid the occasions of sin, and know the state of your souls, a retreat from the world is, to a certain degree, indispensably necessary. Your commerce with a wicked world, certain companies which you have frequented, certain connections which you have formed, have been your ruin. By degrees you have resigned your virtue, and with it the independence of your will. You dare not oppose what you have so frequently yielded to. Your only safety, then, is to fly the danger of obsequious condescension; as long as you refuse to divorce yourselves from difficulty, to withdraw from companions who have led you into the road to perdition, and are pursuing the same course; as long as the business, the cares, the pleasures of the world enslave you, the voice of God will be heard in vain, the same causes will produce the same effects and you will end your days still making purposes of future amendment, still forming resolutions and never performing them.

A renunciation of all communication with the world I do not recommend; I know it is inconsistent with your duties; but a renunciation of all that is corrupt, and an occasional retirement from the cares and distractions of life, this I recommend, and this is necessary for you if you wish your souls to live to God, and your lives to be pleasing to Him. Occasional retirement, a retreat of a few days, has laid the foundation of eminent sanctity, by

affording leisure and opportunity for serious consideration. In the dreary solitude of a wilderness our blessed Lord humbled Himself before His Father, and contemplated His divine perfections; He thought of us, bewailed our transgressions and prayed continually for us. Do you the same for yourselves which our Saviour did then for you. Humble yourself in prayer to God, implore the succor of the Most High; review your years past in bitterness of soul; detest your guilt while you consider the greatness, the goodness of the Being whom you have offended; conjure Him to forgive you, and in serious meditation seek the remedies for your spiritual evils.

To retirement and prayer add mortification. You have made the members of your body subservient to sin, make them now subservient to divine justice. Let not an affected delicacy suggest, as it does often, your inability to comply with fasting or other external penance; this is often the artifice and delusion of self-love, but if your age, your condition, your health, or your constitution will not really bear corporeal mortification, a thousand means may be devised of practising self-denial, without injury to the health or constitution. The will may be restrained, humor and inclination thwarted, curiosity repressed, the appetite denied its favorite gratification, the palate its indulgence; if the body will not bear the rigor of external fasting, yet the eye may be made to fast by severe restraint upon its rovings; the ear may fast by being denied the gratification of superfluous intelligence, of idle and unnecessary conversation; the tongue may be made to fast by being refused the pleasure of vain and superfluous discourse; in a word, all the senses may be condemned to a fast most salutary to the soul, without the smallest injury to the body

Lastly, be ever vigilant to oppose the suggestions of the tempter; he presumed to assault Jesus Christ, be assured he will never spare you, particularly if you enter seriously upon a life of virtue. Expect all the violence of his fury, all the stratagems of his infernal malice. He glories in defeating the endeavors of the repentant sinner; and often has he triumphed over the irresolute, by painting to them, in splendid colors, the pleasures of the world which they have once enjoyed and are now going to resign forever; by representing the hardships of a penitential life, or at least by persuading them not to aspire to so much perfection all at once.

The same arts he will try upon you, while the followers of vanity will endeavor to promote his cause by enforcing his arguments.

But hearken not unto the persuasions of the wicked one; confident in the mercy and power of your God and the merits of your Redeemer, turn from him, saying, "begone Satan!" Remember that "the Lord thy God thou shalt adore, and Him only shalt thou serve." O divine Jesus, our model and our strength, imprint on my mind and the minds of those who hear me, in characters never to be effaced, this saving truth! Attach us indissolubly to thyself, give us thy powerful grace to renounce, with sincerity of heart and mind, all that is in the world, all that fascinates unhappy men to their utter and irremediable ruin, "the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life" (I John ii, 16). Let this be your earnest, fervent prayer, my brethren, for yourselves, for me and for all. In this holy season of grace and mercy, while you are more than usually retired from the world, and even retrench otherwise innocent gratifications, endeavor to copy the example of Jesus Christ, that like Him you may receive the ministry of angels comforting and encouraging you; that in their company and in the company of your God you may receive heavenly consolations that may amply indemnify you for all the pain and difficulty you shall have sustained in conquering the world, the flesh and the devil; and that, your mortal contest being over, you may receive the reward of immortality, and as good and faithful servants enter into the joys of your Lord.

SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

ON RAISING OUR HEARTS TO GOD

"He was transfigured before them."—Matt. xvii, 2.

SYNOPSIS.—Our Lord manifested Himself at His transfiguration to His Apostles in order to strengthen their faith and encourage their hopes. The consideraton of this heavenly scene should do the same for us. How utterly valueless are the things of this world when compared with the joys and happiness of eternal life. The splendor of Jesus concealed in the Holy Eucharist, but for our sakes. The immediate effect on the Apostles; Peter's request, why not granted. Learn to lift our souls, our ambitions, above this narrow temporal life; nothing but the Omnipotent, Infinite God Himself, will satisfy. The Apostles feared the voice of God; what should be our sentiments? That voice often speaks to us, calling us away from sin and the things of sin. Harden no longer our hearts. Do His will, even if it entails suffering, and He will say, "Arise, fear not." This will merit His blessing here, His reward hereafter.

The design of our blessed Lord, in manifesting Himself in this stupendous manner to these three Apostles, was not only to confirm their faith in Him, but also to encourage their hopes, by a display of His glory. He had represented to them the ignominies and sufferings which awaited Him at Jerusalem, and now He affords them a transient glimpse of His glorified body; that, animated by the splendid vision, they might meet and endure the sufferings reserved for themselves, with intrepidity, from the hopes of future glory. The same, my brethren, is the intention of the Church, in prescribing this subject for your consideration this day. Last Sunday you were encouraged to embrace, with willing fervor, the task of mortification, by a view of what your Saviour underwent in the desert to atone for sin: and now is presented to you the mystery of Our Lord's transfiguration, to rouse you to Christian fortitude and Christian exertion; knowing that you must be partakers in His Passion here, that you may participate hereafter in His crown.

To fortify us under the evils incident to mortality, and to support us under the mortifications of the present penitential season, let us ascend Mount Thabor, my brethren, with our blessed Lord, and there, contemplating His glorious transfiguration, derive strength and fortitude, which shall embolden us to ascend Mount

Calvary with our suffering Redeemer, to bear our cross, and heroically walk in His footsteps. Like the Apostle, let us be convinced that the "sufferings of the present time are not comparable to the future glory, that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii, 18), if we suffer in the spirit, and after the example of our divine Master; let us endeavor to disengage our hearts from every earthly affection, and place our hopes and desires in heaven. Who that pretends to Christian virtue and Christian wisdom, but must prefer the eternal fruition of bliss and glory, purchased by light and transitory afflictions, to the enjoyment of shortlived and sensual gratifications, unworthy an immortal spirit, and leading to grief and torment that shall never know end or mitigation.

Our Saviour, taking with Him three of His Apostles, ascends a high mountain, and there, retired from all commerce with the world, addresses Himself to His Father in prayer; and, while He prayed, "he was transfigured before them"; His face became resplendent as the sun, His garments shone in purest brightness, white as the driven snow. Oh, glorious and enrapturing vision, and blessed the eyes that beheld it! Let earthly grandeur and beauty, humbled to the dust, confess their insignificance! Let all human pomp and splendor disappear before the glory of heaven, as the shades of night flee before the radiance of approaching day! In vain would luxury exhaust its treasures, in vain would the united efforts of art and nature attempt to rival this supernatural, this celestial brightness! Silver and gold, with every variegated tint, and every glittering gem, lose their luster: the precious metals sink into dross, and earthly beauty into deformity: the glow and animation of the most exquisite coloring fade away; the attraction of dress and ornament is seen, by comparison, to be, as it really is, mere external decoration, capable indeed of corrupting the heart of the vain admirer, but incapable of conferring real worth, and a fallacious criterion, by which merit is to be determined.

Oh, then, Christian brethren, since we have before our eyes the humility of the Cross to confound, and the splendors of heavenly glory to absorb and annihilate all human pride, all earthly glitter, let us despise the paltry tinsel of this world, and, with a generous ambition, aspire to the honors, the riches, the glories of heaven! If beauty and luster have any charms for our hearts, let us turn our affections to Jesus, the true and only beauty, shining in bright unceasing effulgence, ancient, yet ever new, the "splendor of his

Father's glory and the figure of his substance!" (Heb. i, 3). Yes, sweet Lord, thy beauty, and loveliness, are far beyond the comprehension of our limited understandings; neither are they borrowed, but essentially thy own: and the brightness of thy transfiguration disclosed to Peter, James and John, was but a feeble emanation, an imperfect representation, of that celestial glory, which thy soul enjoyed in the intuitive vision of the Deity, to which it was admitted at the first moment of its creation and union with the eternal Word!

The external splendor of Jesus Christ, which was disclosed in His transfiguration, was concealed from the eyes of men, while dwelling on the earth, that He might instruct us by His example, and by His word, and that He might suffer and die for our redemption. It was on this occasion revealed to His principal disciples, to support our drooping courage, to enliven our hopes, and to teach us that the future sight, and possession of Him, are to be obtained only by our fidelity to Him, as His disciples and followers. He conceals Himself from our eyes in the Sacrament of the blessed Eucharist, that He may give Himself to us as our food and nourishment, but He will disclose Himself to our view in heaven, whole and entire, without shadow or change, for our reward and happiness. We now contemplate Him under the veil of mystery, because this is not the life of glory but of trial; but once admitted to the region of fruition, we shall behold Him "face to face," all veils shall be withdrawn, faith shall yield to unclouded vision and we "shall see and know our God, even as we are seen and known" (I Cor. xiii, 12).

What must have been the astonishment of the Apostles, when they beheld their Master invested with light and glory, in the company of the venerable personages, Moses, the legislator of the Jews, and Elias, the father of the prophets, paying homage, and bearing testimony to Him, who came to cause the reality to succeed to the figures of the law, and to fulfil the predictions of the prophets! Filled with contending sentiments of surprise, fear and joy, at once dazzled and delighted with the grandeur of the spectacle, Peter breaks out in terms expressive of the satisfaction of his soul, "Lord, it is good," etc. But no; the earth is not the seat of glory, the mansion of repose and happiness. If God sometimes discovers the sweetness of His divine countenance to His zealous servants here below, the favor is but transient, and granted only to soothe the sorrows of this pilgrimage, by a glimpse of His transcendent

brightness; it is to encourage them to labor and suffer here with resignation for His sake.

No, my friends, seek not the glory of this life, expect not happiness here on earth, enchain not your immortal souls, by confining their powers and desires within the contracted sphere of this earth; give full scope to that noble ambition, which comes from God, and which nothing less than God can ever fully satisfy; let them soar up to the regions of bliss, and borne on the wings of heavenly contemplation, let them penetrate even to the throne of the Most High; while your bodies are on the earth, let your immortal souls, spurning their corporeal trammels, wing their way to the abode of congenial spirits, and expatiate in heaven. All that is on this vile dunghill of earth, is fleeting and perishable; vanity and affliction of spirit. Even the sweet delight which is experienced in transporting ourselves in spirit, into the presence of Our God, in meditating on Him and divine truths, in contemplating mentally the beauties of His kingdom, and the glories of His everlasting reign, though far, far superior to every earthly satisfaction, yet is infinitely below the joy, the bliss, the ecstatic enjoyment, which await the just in the kingdom of God. Here we are exposed externally to conflict and difficulty, internally agitated by fears, doubts, and disquietude: but in heaven fear and doubt, and anxiety and difficulty and conflict, shall be exchanged for perpetual peace, secure possession, and never-ending felicity. Scarcely had Peter made his petition, when a new scene is presented to their view. A bright cloud appeared above their heads, and for some time arrested all their attention. Gradually descending toward the earth, and enveloping them as with an overspreading canopy, they were at length encircled with the celestial radiance. When lo! when all within them is astonishment and awe, they hear a voice issuing from the midst of the cloud, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, hear ye him" (Matt. xvii, 5).

Struck with increased amazement at the heavenly sound, they yield to impressions of fear, and falling on their faces, await the result in trembling apprehension. Oh, Christians! if the voice of God be thus tremendous to His faithful servants, even when He communicates His instructions, and announces the glad tidings of mercy, redemption, and love, what will be its terrors, when it proceeds from the mouth of Him who will come to judge the living and the dead, pronouncing a sentence of wo and calamity against

His enemies! On this occasion the voice of the Father bears testimony to the character of Jesus; the voice of God Himself, from the bosom of His glory, proclaims to the whole earth, in the persons of these three Apostles, that Jesus is the Son of the living God, whom all are commanded to hear! that nothing is great or good in the sight of the Deity, except Jesus Christ, and what is united with Him, and that nothing is deserving of the divine approbation but what is done for His sake, by His Holy Spirit, and through His grace; that all which is foreign from Jesus, however dignified by earthly honors, is as nothing in the contemplation of divine wisdom and justice. The heavenly oracle commands us to hearken to Jesus Christ, as our Teacher, to believe His doctrine, to practise His law, to imitate His example, to imbibe His Spirit, and follow His maxims. Do we conform to this important injunction? Do we hearken to Jesus Christ, and follow His maxims? Or rather, do we not open our ears and our hearts to the suggestions of the devil, to the solicitations of a wicked world, to our own corrupt inclinations and passions? Can you persuade yourselves that you hearken to Him, when you hear Him calling upon you to abandon a line of conduct which reason and religion convince you is the direct road to perdition? When He bids you renounce the ways of sin, to rouse from the sleep of death, in which you indulge, even on the brink of a precipice, down which, if you fall, you fall into the abyss of misery, whence there is no redemption? Do you hearken to Him, ill-fated Christian, when He in vain commands and solicits you to break the fetters of sin, in which you are enthralled, to surmount that pernicious habit which has long enslaved you, and to which you yield a willing obedience, though it is the cause of anguish to your dearest and tenderest connections, producing shame and sorrow in the breasts of your family and friends, and at certain times shaking your own souls with dire alarms, and harrowing up your hearts with the agonizing pangs of remorse? Again, do you, unhappy beings, persuade yourselves that you hearken to the voice of your Lord and Master, when He conjures you by His tender love, and all His sufferings, to forsake that fatal passion which has plunged you into guilt, and prevents you from seeking and obtaining peace for your souls; to stifle the emotions of anger, to subdue the sentiments of resentment, and deliberate malice, to repress the swellings of pride, to restrain your senses, the rovings of your eyes in impure indulgence or criminal curiosity; the liberty you allow

your ears, ever open to sinful or unprofitable discourse; the sallies of your tongues in profaneness, slander, or wanton conversation? Or can you flatter yourselves that you attend to the voice of your Saviour and Teacher, when He calls on you to renounce that miserable attachment to the mammon of iniquity, which makes you deaf to the cries of poverty, and hardens your hearts against the sufferings of your indigent fellow-creatures; when he requires of you as the necessary means for your sanctification, that you retrench that propensity to worldly vanity and dissipating amusements, to uncharitable or, at best, unprofitable conversation; to keep yourselves within the secure inclosure of salutary retirement, to seek your consolation in communing with God, and your own souls, by means of prayer, meditation, and spiritual reading? My brethren, consider well these questions, and give a candid answer to each of them, not to me, but to your own souls. Give ear to the voice addressed to you from heaven; shut not your ears against the loving calls of your God; stifle not His voice, that speaks within you; and when you hear it, addressing you in complaints, reproaches, or the fond solicitations of a kind Father, anxious for your eternal welfare, harden not your hearts against His ineffable love. Attend to Him with a desire to obey, and He will say to you, as He said to the astonished Apostles, "Arise, fear not." Encouraged by Him, joy will be lighted up in your interior, you will arise from the earth, on which you have so long lain prostrate, you will lift up your eyes toward Him with hope and confidence; and though the world may frown upon you; though, like the Apostles, you may look around and see yourselves deserted by earthly support and interest, and only Jesus with you; yet happy in His company and love, you will despise all inferior delights, and look forward to future glory in His kingdom. Yes; truly blessed are they who are with Jesus! who in all places and in all things see only Jesus, and in all their actions seek Him alone! Blessed are you, though often undervalued and despised by the world, who acknowledge and obey Him as the supreme Lord of your hearts, and whom He acknowledges as His true and faithful disciples! May you ever, by His Holy Grace, continue to be obedient to His commands, and the commands of His Church, which He has ordered all to hear! May you live and die in holy simplicity, derided, perhaps, by the world, the thoughtless and the vain, but applauded by the wise and good, approved by the eternal wisdom of God, and dying received into light and life ever-

lasting. May you never become proficients in that wisdom which is odious to your God; may you never open your ears to a voice in opposition to His truth, but continue firmly to believe what He teaches, through that medium which He has appointed to convey His mandates to men, and faithfully to practise what He enjoins: waiting in humble hope and patient expectation of that day, when your earthly bodies shall be "reformed in likeness of his glorious body," and, together with your souls, be admitted to the sight and enjoyment of that brightness and glory, which was faintly represented in the transfiguration on Mount Thabor, but which will glow in undiminished effulgence throughout eternity.

THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

ON CONFESSION

"When he had cast out the devil, the dumb spoke."—Luke xi, 14.

SYNOPSIS.—The great mercy and love of God shown in the institution of the Sacrament of Penance. Many despise this mercy and love by neglecting or misusing this wonderful gift. Conditions necessary for fruitful reception of this Sacrament; (1) Knowledge of, (2) manifestation of, (3) sorrow for all our grievous sins. Self-examination gives the requisite knowledge. This should be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and this is obtained by fervent prayer. The confession should be humble, sincere, complete. Here we must beware of self-deception. The penalties of a bad confession. Strive to do too much rather than run the risk of doing too little.

As the season of Lent advances, and we draw nearer to the solemnity of the Christian Passover, the Church of God encourages her children to forsake the ways of darkness, to enter the regions of light, and to walk as children of the light. In the Gospel is exhibited to our view a miracle of Our Lord, by which He cast out a devil, and "the same was dumb"—a figure of that spirit of obstinacy which prevents many Christians from pursuing their own real interest, by confessing their sins with true repentance to the ministers of Jesus Christ. He has said to the pastors of His Church: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost, whose sins ye shall forgive," etc. (John xx, 22). While the enemy of man's salvation exerts his utmost influence to prevent sinners from availing themselves of this proof of Our Lord's mercy and love, let the children of the Church exult and bless the Lord, who "has given such power to men": a power, exclaims St. Chrysostom, not granted to angels or archangels. But have we not reason to lament, that notwithstanding this institution of tender compassion, by which sinners may obtain reconciliation and grace, still do we find among mankind multitudes who continue through life to offend God, and finally die in their sins! The cause of this evil is discovered in the perversity of some, and the negligence of others; in the perversity of those who keep at a distance from this salutary institution, and in the negligence of others who approach to it in such manner as to derive

from it no advantage whatever. I have, on other occasions, endeavored to overcome the repugnance of the former, by showing the utility and necessity of recurring to this saving institution; at present I shall address myself to the latter description of persons, and to all who desire to profit by the mercy of heaven, showing you what are the principal conditions necessary for a good confession.

The conditions requisite to a worthy participation of the Sacrament of Penance, are, according to the Council of Trent, these three: "A knowledge of our sins," "a manifestation of them to God's minister," and "a hearty sorrow for them." In order to acquire a complete knowledge of our offenses, it is absolutely necessary that the assistance of God be earnestly solicited, and that a reasonable time be spent in recollection, and a diligent examination of conscience. Shall it be expected that you will discover every secret defect, every lurking vice, without the special aid of heaven? or can you imagine it to be possible for you to acquire a sufficient knowledge of yourselves, by a hasty glance, cast upon your interior, while the most difficult of all tasks is for a man to know himself? There are certain sins, which present themselves at the first view, and can not be hidden, such as all the world beholds and reprobates; but there are others of a secret nature, which will not be observed without an assiduous examination, and the light of the Holy Ghost, implored in fervent prayer. There are certain injustices, or other favorite crimes, over which self-love artfully throws a veil, and which too many endeavor to screen even from their own observation. There are certain sins of "confidence," if I may so express myself, which the sinner almost persuades himself he is pledged to overlook; certain tender conversations, a reciprocal intercourse and exchange of fond affection, and amorous sentiment; certain familiarities which, at first, perhaps, cost much to conscience, but which now conscience has been brought to yield to them, are difficult to renounce: these, and such as these, may be termed sins of "reserve," which too many persons will not see, or seeing, turn away and will not contemplate. As a man who beholds himself in a glass, and "goes away, and presently forgets what manner of man he is"; so do many persons, in approaching the Sacrament of Penance, just throw a glance of observation over their interior, just scan the surface, and perform a work unpleasing to God, and no way beneficial to themselves. If you wish to confess your sins, you must first know

them, and in order to know them, the grace and light of God must be previously implored, and a portion of time given to the examination of your conscience, proportionate to the time that has elapsed since your last confession, and to the occasions of sin to which you have been exposed. Let not any of you deceive yourselves into a superficial self-examination, grounded on the expectation of being examined by your director. He may indeed be necessitated to question you to a certain degree, but as confession is a tribunal at which the sinner is to appear in evidence against himself, and to be his own accuser, he is to lay open his guilt by a voluntary acknowledgment, and not to expect it to be wrung from him by repeated questions, which are only to produce forced answers. How can you expect, that a person who is perhaps a total stranger to you, who, at all events, is unacquainted with your connections, your passions, your temper and disposition, can enter into a disquisition respecting a multitude of sins, the knowledge of which depends upon all these circumstances. Or should he join his utmost endeavors to yours, should you make every inquiry which ability and practise can suggest, will you be able, you to whom your interior presents a chaos of darkness and confusion, will you be able, in reply to his interrogations, to run over the bounds of time and space with distinct intuition? Will you be able to call up before you, in rapid and momentary representation, every place, and person, and object, and idea necessary to awaken the remembrance, and to afford a competent knowledge of your past sins, sufficient to enable you to pronounce, with decision, upon what you have, or have not committed? Oh! no: time and reflection, joined to earnest, fervent prayer, will alone disclose to yourselves the numerous wounds which sin has inflicted on your souls, and alone enable you to lay open all your various maladies to your spiritual physician.

Having implored the light of heaven, and, in the best manner you were able, followed its guidance, then, as Our Lord said to the leper whom He miraculously cleansed, "Go, show yourselves to the priests" (Luke v, 14). Confession is a sincere declaration of all our grievous sins to a priest, a manifestation of our weaknesses and miseries. The nature of the sin must be clearly expressed, and every circumstance which can change the nature must be specified. Every sin, without exception, must be made known; sins of "transient offense," sins of "habit," and "custom," and "constitution"; sins of "commission" and "omission"; of "state" and

"condition"; toward "God" and our "neighbor"; and, in the first place, the predominant ruling vice or passion, which bears ascendant sway, and has acted the tyrant in the kingdom of your hearts, must be first surrendered. Nothing must be withheld; even those seeming virtues, which are vices in disguise, must be brought to light; those "pious" detractions, those "saintly" resentments, if I may so call them; that false humility and feigned devotion; those mortifications of the flesh submitted to, for the gratification of pride or humor; those almsdeeds of ostentation, performed neither for the sake of God, nor of His indigent creatures, but for the applause of men; and every good action which has been rendered barren, because it had not God for its motive and object, its beginning and end. To some persons, who approach the holy tribunal, confession is an unwilling tribute, paid to circumstances or custom; consequently the compliance with it requires the assumption of a character which is quite forced, and to support it with tolerable grace, what precautions, what criminal precautions are adopted! These persons present their sins only half disclosed to view, varnished over with every pretext and plausibility that is likely to impose upon their director: they hesitate and delay; drop a word which produces increased obscurity, rather than elucidation; while the minister of God, in distress and agony, and concern at such sacrilegious prevarication, is employed in conjecturing what is meant, if that be possible; yet if a word escapes which seems to afford a ray of light, and to enable him to acquire further information, they prevent his charitable endeavors by determined silence. Oh, miserable, deluded hypocrites, the religion which you profess seems to require of you that you approach the sacraments, and you approach them only to profane them and pollute yourselves! To endeavor to give a color to iniquity; to deck out sin in the garb of virtue, or to palliate it under the guise of amiable weakness; to make it appear to your guide and director, what it never can be, either creditable or supportable; is to insult the sacred ministry of Jesus Christ, to despise Him, in despising His vicegerents, and to draw down a torrent of vengeance, if not here on earth, in hell for eternity. If you deceive the representatives of Christ, you cannot deceive Him; the vindictive, the libertine, the slave of intemperance, pride, or lust, may approach to the holy table; the world may tremble in amazement; but if these impose upon the "dispensers of the mysteries of God," this will be their consolation, that the complaint of the Lord against His

prophets, in the old law, that they concealed the truth from the children of men, is no longer to be made against His ministers of the new covenant: no, O God of justice and truth, it is not upon us that thou wilt hurl thy vindictive thunders, for the concealment of thy doctrines, but upon a faithless and prevaricating people, who have recourse to duplicity and deceit to lead us into error!

Even persons whose lives are in many respects regular, are sometimes subject to these defects. There are certain sins which seem to claim a kind of privilege; these are not examined into, and of course are not confessed. These persons will accuse themselves of distraction in prayer, of want of fervor in the service of God, of faults which scarcely present the necessary matter for absolution, but they make no account of indulging a peevish, malignant disposition, a splenetic, satirical, and caustic temper, an uncharitable and affected zeal, which leads them to form rash judgments against their neighbor, which makes them censure the conduct of one, and blacken the character of another, without compassion or concern. How many, practising several of the duties of religion with punctuality and exactness, cherish, without remorse, animosities and dislikes in regard of their fellow-Christians? How many look with contempt on some object of their aversion, and indulge in pride and malice without any regard to the crime which they commit against Almighty God? But I should undertake an endless task, were I to attempt an enumeration of the various illusions by which mankind deceive themselves: I have said sufficient to put you on your guard against this self-deception; the rest I leave to your own reflections.

The third requisite to obtain forgiveness of actual sin, is a hearty sorrow and detestation of our offenses: but as this demands a more special consideration, I must refer it (for want of sufficient time at present) to the first convenient Sunday, when, with the blessing of God, we will take a more deliberate view of the indispensable condition to forgiveness. Let me conclude by hoping that what I have said upon the necessity of a serious and impartial examination of conscience, will induce you to carry your research into the most secret recesses of your souls, begging of the Almighty that His holy light will precede and accompany you, that so you may be cleansed from your hidden sins, and from those to which you may have been accessory in others. I trust, too, that you will be induced (whatever repugnance may be experienced) to confess with sincerity, humility,

and ingenuous self-accusation, every fault which presents itself before you; never listening to the arguments which the devil, or self-love, may suggest, to persuade you to conceal anything, and thus to cherish within your breast a dangerous fire, smothered but not extinguished. To avoid the phantoms of false error, to what does the sinner expose himself? To a real horror and accumulated confusion, occasioned by the immense weight of the Almighty's vengeance, the scoffs of an assembled world, and the taunts of triumphant devils: to become a victim of merited torments throughout eternity! Oh, Christians! my fellow-creatures, my brethren and my friends, let not a mere specter formed by imagination, a shadow, prevent you from recovering the grace of your loving God, who has spared you, notwithstanding your many provocations, who still calls upon you to forsake the ways of sin, and return to Him; who Himself declares, that He "wills not the death of the sinner, but that he be converted and live" (Ezech. xviii, 23). "Why then will you die, oh house of Israel?" (Ib. 31). While sin is everywhere raging with increasing fury, while thousands are stooping to the ignominious and tyranical yoke of Satan, proud of their captivity, and glorying in their shame, while hell is daily swallowing up multitudes, who shall never more enjoy one moment of liberty or ease; resolve to insure your salvation by a sincere conversion to God. What if you should do more than is absolutely necessary to escape hell: your God deserves all that you can do for Him, and all your labors will be amply rewarded. But what, if endeavoring to do "just enough" to avoid punishment, you should do "just too little"? Ah! consider that ages will not be able to expiate your guilty folly; eternal regret will not repair your negligence. Now, then, having it in your power to enrich your souls with good works, which will secure your destiny to immortal happiness; shake off the slumbers of indifference; begin without delay; "be ye followers of God as most dear children," not measuring your performances by the mean consideration of interest, but let gratitude impel you to a suitable return for all God's favors, let love produce a return of love; "walk in love," says the Apostle, "as Christ also hath loved us" (Eph. v, 1). Offer Him your hearts, and live for Him alone; that when He shall call you out of this life, having lived *for* Him on earth, you may live *with* Him in heaven, and enjoy His glorious presence forever.

FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

ON CONTRITION

"Do penance; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."—Matt. iv, 17.

SYNOPSIS.—Necessity of contrition for a good confession. Its qualities: (1) It must be interior, real; not merely lip sorrow. God is not deceived by hypocrisy and pretension. (2) Supernatural; this can only be effected by grace. This sorrow is founded not on earthly motives, not on natural loss, suffering, etc., which may come as the result of sin, but on the loss of God, of heaven, etc. (3) It must be sovereign; sin must be detested as the greatest of all evils. With this sorrow confession is not something to be avoided and detested. (4) Universal; must extend to all mortal sins. True sorrow comes from the heart, and is known by its effects, viz., change of life. Pray fervently and constantly to obtain this gift.

The Gospel of this Sunday, my brethren, is indeed fruitful in instruction: and by what is there exhibited in the goodness of our blessed Saviour, in favor of those who followed Him, the sincere Christian is powerfully animated to confidence in the protection of Divine Providence. But a subject more interesting and more intimately allied to the multiplication of the five loaves is the wondrous multiplication of the Bread of Life, present at the same time on so many altars, and distributed to millions, for the spiritual nourishment and support of their souls to life everlasting. Truly "this is the bread that cometh down from heaven" (John vi, 50); this is the "living bread, of which if any man eat, he shall live forever"; for this bread, as Jesus Christ has expressly declared, is His "flesh"; the same body which was immolated on the Cross, for man's redemption. "The bread that I will give, is my flesh, for the life of the world" (verse 52).

This stupendous exertion of infinite and omnipotent love should make the subject of our consideration this day, had I not last Sunday, after speaking to you on the confession of sin, and the previous examination of conscience, been under the necessity of deferring to some future time the consideration of a part of the Sacrament of Penance, equally important with confession, and promised to attend to it this day. This important and necessary part of the Sacrament, is "contrition"; without which every com-

pliance with external ceremonies, forms, and practises, is perfectly nugatory, and must tend rather to increase, than to obliterate the guilt of the sinner. Without contrition, which is a sorrow of the heart for sin committed with a firm purpose to sin no more for the future (*animi dolor de peccato commisso cum proposito non peccandi de cetero*), the confession of sin is either a mockery, or an act of hypocrisy, insulting to the God of mercy, injurious to ourselves. This sorrow is the principal and essential ingredient of true repentance: without it no humiliation will be effectual to the remission of sin; yet such is its efficacy, that in circumstances where confession to a priest is not practicable, it is sufficient to obtain the forgiveness of God and reconcile the sinner. Let us then, my friends, consider attentively, for much it imports us to consider the nature of contrition, and the motives on which it ought to be formed.

First. Contrition, in order to be efficacious in appeasing the wrath of God, and reconciling the sinner, must be "interior": that is, it must have possession of the heart. "Be converted to me," says the Lord, by His prophet (Joel ii, 12), "with all your hearts:—rend your hearts, and not your garments." No; He who has been offended, sees into the deepest recesses of the interior, nor will He be imposed upon, by the assumed appearance of grief, without the reality. Mere professions of the lips, mere external gestures, an humble posture of the body, will not deceive the great Searcher of hearts, the Judge of all mankind, the Avenger of guilt. In vain shall the tear flow, the sigh and the groan be heaved, if the heart be not pierced with affliction for the outrage that it has consented to offer to its God. Though you should for hours be stretched out in prostration upon the naked earth, though you should smite your breasts, and tear your hair, and rend your garments, the offended Deity will despise your outward homage, the show of repentance, if your hearts be not rent in sorrow for your ingratitude. "Sacrifice and oblation he does not desire," the offerings of your hands He disregards, "with holocausts he will not be delighted." The sacrifice pleasing to Him is "an afflicted spirit," the "contrite and humble heart, O God, thou will not despise" (Ps. l, 17).

The external display of grief and devotion may be, and has been, assumed by hypocrites. When true contrition pervades the soul, all the affections of the heart, which had been turned from God to sin, will be restored to Him: the soul will lament its separation from the source of all its good, will bewail its own state of wretched-

ness and dereliction, and even more than its own misfortune will grieve that the author of all sanctity, the God of all purity, and loveliness, and beauty, and perfection, has been offended—basely, ungratefully offended—by His creature, the work of His hands, the object of His regard and affection. Were such our sorrow, my friends, when we approach the sacred tribunal, should we in a few days present the same characters to the view of men and angels? Should we return so soon to those very crimes which we protested we abhorred and renounced forever? Ah! in other cases hatred is not so soon removed, even when we are required by duty, and declare that we are using our utmost endeavors to subdue it. Certainly those persons willingly deceive themselves, who, in confessing their sins, wait not till, by the grace of God, their souls are penetrated by this lively and heartrending compunction, but satisfy themselves with reciting certain forms of prayer in their manuals, conceiving that when this is performed, and a certain portion of time, which they observe to be allotted to preparation by others, of their condition and acquaintance, is given to the recital of these particular prayers, all is done, the work of self-preparation is completed, that they may now go and accuse themselves of some habitual transgressions, as they have often done before, return from the tribunal of mercy, recite a short prayer after confession, as they find it in their prayer book, close the book and retire; no more troubling themselves about their sins, which are henceforth forgotten, and to be replaced by similar offenses, to be confessed in a similar manner. Good God! is it to such as these that thou hast promised mercy? and shall thy Blood, which flowed with so much pain from thy sacred Body, obtain forgiveness on earth and everlasting happiness in heaven for these easy penitents, Oh, no; it is by the malice of the heart that sin is perpetuated, and it is in the heart that repentance must be found: the heart must be changed, or sin will not be forgiven.

Secondly. Another essential quality in contrition is, that it be "supernatural." We have turned from God by our own malice and contempt of His graces, but we can not return to Him of ourselves; our conversion must be the effect of His grace. If of ourselves we are incapable of one good thought, how shall we be capable, of "ourselves," to detest and abhor sin, to extricate ourselves from the fetters, which the enemy of our souls has thrown around us, from the servitude to which we have submitted by yield-

ing to His suggestions? Some are inclined to imagine that contrition is easily obtained; that in a moment, we can turn to God, and insure His forgiveness, by merely telling Him that we expect it: consequently that the sinner can at any time effect his peace with God, just at his own option and inclination. Under this delusive but dangerous error, the enormity of sin is overlooked, the certainty of death is forgotten, the dreadful punishments reserved for sin are disregarded, and many are seen to defer their repentance, professing at the same time an intention to repent, but at some future period, when sin shall lose its attraction, and repentance becomes more suitable to their convenience. But, my friends, without the aid of heaven, never will you be able to renounce sin, never will you be more disposed to detest it. Bending under a weight of years, confined to your chair or to your bed, prevented by the debility of age from the actual commission of many sins, still will your heart be wedded to iniquity, your affections will cling to sinful enjoyments, and your mind dwell on imaginary gratifications, which can never more be realized. Without the grace of God never can man be converted from vice to virtue; without the previous aid and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it is impossible for him to elicit an act of contrition, grounded on motives which will appease the divine justice, and obtain the remission of sin. Human grief may be felt in the soul, motives of mere self-interest may make the sinner wish that he had not offended God, and by his crimes drawn down upon his own head the anger of the Most High, and the imminent effects of that anger; but unless the Almighty pierce his heart, though like Antiochus he shed abundance of tears, he sorrows for himself, not for his sins, he laments not that he has offended God, but worked his own wo. The concern which is sometimes felt and taken for contrition, is nothing more than the working of self-love, a fear arising from the necessity of acknowledging sin, of exposing the wounds of the soul, the filth of an impure heart; and this apprehension, so far from being true contrition for sin, diminishes in proportion as contrition penetrates the soul.

Supernatural sorrow makes the penitent view, without concern, the mere human inconveniences which attend upon repentance, and a change of life: whereas this dread, which alarms and agitates them, makes them consider the salutary institution of confession as the greatest evil, and keeps many at a distance from the Sacrament of Penance, while some, torn by the remorse of guilt, approach

to the tribunal, and take this confusion for that sorrow, which atones for iniquity, this aversion for confession for aversion for sin. They imagine themselves to be sincere penitents, and expect the reward of a contrite and humble heart, while they are suffering only the torments inflicted by their own pride, and the consequences of a confusion which is pride's genuine offspring.

It is indeed true that "fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. cx, 9), but that fear is widely different from the fear which is here spoken of. There is a "shame," too, "that bringeth glory and grace" (Eccl. iv, 25), but it is quite of another character and nature from that which is experienced by these persons. This shame is regardless of the opinion of men, it is a shame at having offended the Almighty; the Father, the friend, the protector of his creatures. It is a shame that would be felt in irresistible blushes, far from the view of men, in deepest solitude, or in the center of the earth. That God beholds his guilt, is the confusion and misery of the true penitent, not that it is seen by human eye, or heard by the ear of man. This shame, and its concomitant sorrow must be the gift of God, earnestly implored and fervently desired.

Thirdly. Contrition must also be a "sovereign" sorrow: it must be such as to detest sin above all evils; to love God so as to prefer the loss of every good to the loss of Him, who is the sovereign good. How many are there who would be happy (were the thing possible) to join the commission of sin with the salvation of their souls, regardless of their displeasing God! and how many actually endeavor to unite the gratification of every appetite and desire, with the hope of possessing God for eternity; or, to speak more properly, endeavor to enjoy every satisfaction on earth, and hope to do the same in heaven! for in their contemplation of the joys of heaven, they dwell not on the delights of divine love, possessing in full fruition that unbounded beauty and excellence, which can satisfy every desire of the enamored soul. Many approach to the Sacrament of Penance, not detesting sin above all things, but with a reluctance, rather serving to prove that they love sin above everything else: so unwilling are they to tear themselves from it, even for a time. For, it is much to be feared, they do not, at the moment, even indulge a hope that they have so forsaken sin, as to have abandoned it forever. Ah! my Christian friends, were our sorrow for sin superior to every other sorrow, were our hatred for it above every other dislike and abhorrence, should we not show signs of our anti-

pathy and aversion, since in other cases we find it so difficult to conceal or disguise them?

Fourthly. It is requisite that contrition be "universal": that is, it must be extended to every mortal sin: for that person can never be truly grieved, for having offended God, who is not grieved for every act or word, thought or omission, which has given God displeasure. It will not be sufficient to renounce what the heart is not inclined to; the temptation may be over, and be felt no more: no difficulty will, of course, be experienced, in renouncing that which the heart no longer affects, or that which may possibly have produced worldly loss, or terrestrial inconvenience: but this is not to grieve for having yielded to temptation, when it was gratefully embraced, this is not to grieve with a sorrow proceeding from God. The love of God enters into, refines, and exalts true contrition, purifying it from the dross of interested self-love, and extending it to all, that is displeasing in the sight of an offended Deity.

My brethren, it is necessary to describe to you the form and character of genuine contrition, not merely to vindicate the doctrine of the Catholic Church, by showing that, for the remission of sin in the Sacrament of Penance, she deems it necessary that the heart be changed, and sin repudiated by an eternal divorce, but also that you may not be deceived by mistaking the shadow of contrition for the substance. I know that the seat of grief, as of all the passions, is the heart, and that it does not consist in external demonstrations. But still you may judge of your sorrow by its effects: and in mere human calamities your sorrow is neither still nor silent. In these you are not indifferent, and the exterior in unison with the interior, bespeaks the affliction under which the soul labors. In losses, or other earthly misfortunes, how are the spirits depressed, how is the mind agitated: then does the tear, the sigh, the groan, the countenance, the whole exterior prove the sincerity of that grief, which rends the heart. You are sometimes moved by sorrows that are not your own, the tale of deep distress excites the most powerful sympathies: if then you can be moved by the calamities of others, surely you will not be insensible to your own.

It is for want of knowing and feeling the nature and extent of spiritual evils, which knowledge must be inspired by God, and will be communicated by Him to those, who seek the wisdom of God, and are brought to a true knowledge of themselves by mental prayer, it is for want of this knowledge and this feeling that we are un-

moved at the view of our treasons against God, indifferent to His displeasure, and if affected in a slight degree at the thought of eternal torments, this is only from a mere corporeal feeling, from a dread of material suffering, not from a love of God, or a horror at the thought of losing the object of our affections, the source of all that is good, and of being separated from our God forever. Since it is by the grace of God alone that you can obtain a supernatural, sovereign, universal sorrow, for your sins, a true contrition, earnestly beseech Him to bestow upon you this His gift: without it, you confess in vain, your sins will still be upon you, and you will remain a child of wrath, an object of detestation in the sight of God. Let not this be petitioned for, barely, when you are intending to approach the Sacrament of Penance, but at all times, that your sorrow for sin may be ever on the increase, that the Lord will improve and supply any past deficiencies in approaching the heavenly institution, that He will "wash you still more from your iniquity, and cleanse you from your sin," and that moved by your sorrow for your ingratitude, He will show you mercy, who has declared that "a contrite and humble heart he will not despise" (Ps. 1).

PASSION SUNDAY

ON COMMUNION

"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Holy Ghost offered himself without spot to God, cleanse our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God."—Heb. ix, 14.

SYNOPSIS.—The Sacrifice of Calvary and its benefits our consideration to-day. Definition of sacrifice; its purpose; its necessity. The sacrifices of the Old Law. Their inability of themselves to appease God; the reason for this. The sacrifice of the New Law; its nature—the Victim; the priest; its efficacy. Through this alone can sins be forgiven. Christ is not only our Victim, but likewise our Advocate, with His eternal Father. How guilty are all who reject the effects of this sacrifice, or who abuse the loving generosity of Christ, the Victim? What punishments has God in store for such reckless souls? It behooves us during this time of grace to prepare well for the participation in the merits of the sacrifice of Our Saviour.

The present Sunday is, by ecclesiastical usage, named "Passion Sunday," because the Church, during the fortnight which follows, proposes to honor with particular solemnity and devotion, the passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and invites her children, during the succeeding days, to join with her in acts of veneration, love, and gratitude, for the mercies displayed by Him in effecting the redemption of man by dying for his sins. All the ceremonies and prayers which she presents to us, whether in the holy Mass, or the divine office, tend to excite the devotion of the faithful toward Jesus, suffering for our offenses. No subject can be offered to our consideration more noble and elevated than that which is contained in the epistle of this day.

Last Sunday we were reminded of the difference between the old law and the new, exemplified by St. Paul, in his epistle to the Galatians, in the two sons of Abraham, one the son of the *bond woman*, the other of the *free woman;* and in the lesson of to-day is placed before our eyes all that is elevated in the law of grace, the sacrifice of the Cross, the source of all the spiritual benefits imparted to mankind, from the creation of the world. The death of our great High Priest is exhibited to our view, by which the crimes of men have been expiated; and the excellence and efficacy of the sacrifice, which Jesus offered on the Cross, and which is each day renewed in the

sacrifice of the altar, together with the dignity of the priest who makes the oblation, constitute the superiority of the law of grace over the ancient alliance. Let me this day endeavor to enforce the dignity and efficacy of the sacrifice offered on the Cross, entering thus into the sentiments of our spiritual parent, the Church of Christ; and if time will allow it, to expose the unnatural conduct of many Christians who frustrate the ends of this great sacrifice in their regard, and, in some sense, renew the *bloody* sacrifice by the improper manner in which they approach those holy Sacraments by which the fruits of our Saviour's passion are applied to our souls.

Sacrifice is that act of religion by which is offered to God, by the hands of a priest, a victim, which is consecrated and consumed in honor of the Supreme Being. Sacrifice is essential to religion, because it is an homage essentially due to God, as an acknowledgment of His sovereign dominion over creatures, as a satisfaction offered to His justice, a thanksgiving for His favors bestowed upon us, and to obtain from His bounty those aids and graces of which we stand in need. Thus in the old law different sacrifices were appointed; the "holocaust," as a full and unreserved homage due to God; the "sin offering," or victim of "propitiation" to appease His anger; and the "peace offering," to return thanks for favors received, and to beg a continuation of His blessing.

But what were the sacrifices of the law of nature, or the written law of the Old Testament? or what virtue did they contain by which they could offer to God the honor which is His due? They could not give to Him the glory of which He is worthy, nor could they appease His anger, nor present an adequate return of thanks for His goodness, nor obtain from Him a continuation of mercy and grace; it was impossible that sins against the supreme majesty of God should be expiated by the blood of oxen or of goats. Whence then is miserable man to hope for mercy? The Apostle informs us, victims and oblations, sacrifices and holocausts for sin were not agreeable to the Lord; for His only Son He formed a body to be immolated in atonement for man's offenses. Oh, inconceivable effect of love! I come, said our dear Redeemer, I come to accomplish thy will, to supply the inefficacy of all the ancient sacrifices, to expiate the sins of man by the effusion of my Blood! Thus, my brethren, did Jesus Christ offer Himself to be the High Priest of the new law, and He fulfilled the important office by dying on the Cross.

It is of this sacrifice offered by our Redeemer that St. Paul speaks in the epistle of this day, when he says that "Christ being come, the High Priest of future good things, . . . hath entered once into the holy place, and purchased for us an eternal redemption, not by the blood of goats nor of calves, but by his own blood" (Heb. ix, 11-12). He gives us the most sublime idea of this sacrifice, when he declares that the sacrifices of the old law were but a type, a shadow, of the good things to come. In fact, what were the victims and the priests of the old law, and what were the effects of its sacrifices, compared with those of the New Testament? The Jewish priests were themselves men and sinners; the offerings and victims, which they sacrificed, were the fruits of the earth, or animals slaughtered on their altars; but in the sacrifice of the *new* law, who is the priest and what is the victim? The priest is God Himself, who, having deigned to assume our nature, offered Himself, and poured out His own Blood, for the glory of His Father, and the salvation of man. What tongue can display in adequate language, or what understanding can conceive the dignity of this august sacrifice? Let us at least rejoice that by it the Deity received an infinite honor, because the priest who offered it was of infinite dignity; nor could any inferior personage, however exalted, have given to God the glory which God required.

But Jesus did not offer Himself in sacrifice without a view to our salvation, as well as for the glory of His Father. It was to satisfy the demands of divine justice upon guilty man, which man was unable to satisfy. God has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, according to what St. Paul has said (II Cor v. 19), "God indeed was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to them their sins."

But with respect to the effects of this sacrifice, such is the efficacy of the oblation, such the dignity of the priest and of the victim, that the effects of the sacrifice are inexhaustible and infinite. It is through it alone that we obtain forgiveness of our sins; all the graces that have at any time been conferred upon men, that *are* bestowed on us, and *shall* forever *be* bestowed upon men to the end of time, are but the fruits of this stupendous sacrifice; and according to St. Paul, by "one oblation he hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. x, 14). From Him all the Sacraments derive their virtue and efficacy; they are the channels through which the fruits of His passion and death are communicated to

our souls, and seeing from whence they receive their force and value, we can not, for a moment, entertain a doubt of those wonderful and beneficent effects, annexed to the worthy reception of them. We have a Victim, offered for the sins of the world, of infinite value and dignity; and we have a sacrifice, or "High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and higher than the heavens," even placed at the right hand of God, there forever living to intercede for us. For even in heaven He officiates as our High Priest; there He is our mediator with His Father; and, after having made our peace with His Father, by dying on the Cross, He vouchsafes still to plead our cause, and by His powerful intervention to obtain for us the application of those merits which He purchased for us by His death. See then the immeasurable superiority of the sacrifice of the Cross over every sacrifice of the natural law and of the ancient alliance, as to the dignity of the priest, the merits and efficacy of the sacrifice.

The ancient sacrifices could no more than purify the body, the virtue of this reaches to the soul; it extends to all times, and places and persons; it is in the power of all to participate in its blessed effects, both in time and in eternity. What then must be our misfortune, as well as our guilt, if we refuse and reject them! Is it not a melancholy reflection, that with all the prospect of present and future happiness, and with the means of attaining to it presented to them, men should still prefer misery to happiness, slavery to liberty, hell to heaven? For, alas! excellent as is the sacrifice which the Son of God has offered for mankind, sweet and beneficent as are its effects, multitudes there are who behold the mercies of God with the coldest indifference; who, so far from making a good use of the means afforded them by Our Lord, of experiencing the blessed fruits of His passion, abuse these means with ingratitude and effrontery.

Is it possible that the blessings purchased for us, by the death of the Son of God, should be trampled under foot, and His Blood profaned with unfeeling impiety? Oh, would to God that these abominations were less frequent, and that at this time, when Jesus Christ desires to communicate to the world the merits of His sacred passion with holy profusion, the guilt of profanation may not be multiplied. It is in the approaching season of peculiar mercy, when the heavens are, as it were, opened to shower down streams of grace in rich abundance, that the Jewish Passover is renewed, and

the innocent Lamb of God, the Saviour of the world, is treated with greater indignity than when forced to die the cruel death of the Cross. I speak not of those who keep at a distance from the sources of grace, but those who, approaching the Sacrament of Penance without suitable dispositions of heart, increase their guilt by eating and drinking judgment to themselves, at the holy table; thus putting Jesus Christ to death in a spiritual manner; and, as it were, fastening Him to a Cross in their souls, a thousand times more opprobrious than that to which He was nailed upon Mount Calvary. May Almighty God, in His mercy, preserve all of us from this calamity at the approaching solemnity!

When the innocent Abel fell by the murderous hand of his brother, God thus addressed the perpetrator of that crime: "What hast thou done," said He to Cain, "the voice of thy brother's blood crieth to me from the earth. Now, therefore, cursed shalt thou be upon the earth, which hath opened its mouth and received the blood of thy brother at thy hand" (Gen. iv, 10-11). But what must be the reproaches of the Lord against those who cruelly spill the Blood of His only Son? who scatter, if I may so express myself, and trample under foot the price of their redemption? Will not this precious Blood cry out continually for vengeance against the impious profaners of these sacred mysteries? Will not the malediction of the Most High fall heavily upon them?

Let not this, my brethren, prevent you from approaching to the source of grace and mercy. I have already said that the virtue of the sacrifice of the Cross is infinite, and that the Blood of our Lord was spilt for the reconciliation of the sinner. Let what I have said prevail upon you to approacn the tribunal of Penance with the sorrowings of a heart contrite and humble, with sentiments of detestation for all your past sins, with purposes, sincere and fervent never more, by the grace of God, to forfeit His love by one voluntary transgression. Then will the precious Blood of Christ, the Victim of propitiation, plead in your behalf, and the God of compassion pardon you all your transgressions. As often as you assist at the celebration of the sacred mysteries, unite yourselves with Him, who is immolated in a mystical, unbloody manner on our altars. Testify your gratitude for His infinite love, by the strictest attention and unreserved devotion; beg of Him to raise your minds to the comprehension of the greatness and efficacy of His sacrifice; entreat Him to pardon every abuse and every slight of which you

may have been heretofore guilty; promise Him no more to abuse His gifts and graces. If hitherto you have not labored in earnest to purify your consciences, hasten to do it without delay, that you may be living members of Jesus Christ, your head. During these two last weeks of Lent, call frequently to mind all that your divine Lord has done and suffered for us, that He might bring us to Himself. Oh, what blessings has He not prepared for us; and cold must be our hearts and dead our feelings, if we be not moved to sentiments of compassion and love. May He awaken in us all a due sense of His benefits and our necessities, of our unworthiness and His infinite mercies; that we may abundantly participate in the fruits of redemption, of grace and reconciliation here, and life everlasting hereafter.

EASTER SUNDAY

ON THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

"Let us feast, not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."—I Cor. v, 8.

SYNOPSIS.—This is the day of joy and triumph; of victory over sin and death. All invited to participate with gratitude and love in the victory of Christ. Conditions for sharing in the fruits of the resurrection. 1*st. We must purge out the old leaven, i. e., sin. We must resolve to sin no more—passions must be conquered.* 2*d. We must imitate the virtues placed before us by our Victim on the Cross, viz., humility, patience, obedience and charity. Motives to help us.* 1*st. Gratitude.* 2*d. Love. Meditation on the Sacred Passion will fill our souls with these sentiments.*

We have now, dear brethren, entered upon the days of joy and exultation; we meet to celebrate the triumphs of our Redeemer, our Lord Jesus Christ, victorious over sin and death, crowned with the wreath of conquest, and bearing away the spoils from His and our enemy. This victory of our immortal Chieftain is a subject of joy to all true Christians, and you are all invited to participate in the sentiments of gratitude and love, which the Church of Christ feels and expresses on this chief festival of the Christian religion. "Bless ye the Lord, all his elect; keep days of joy, and give glory to him" (Tob. xiii, 10). Yes; give glory, and praise, and jubilation to Jesus, now risen from the grave; He has broken the bolts and gates of death; He has broken the bars of hell, and overthrown the power of the devil. By this victory over the powers of death, He has given us an assurance of our future resurrection, and future immortality. "He will reform the body of our lowliness," says St. Paul, "made like to the body of his glory" (Phil. iii, 21).

As He has risen from the grave immortal and impassible, so shall our bodies be hereafter delivered from the prison of the grave, and in our flesh shall we see God. But on what condition will He raise us from death to the participation of His glory? On condition that in imitation of His resurrection, we arise from the death of sin, that "we cast off the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light,"

provided that we observe a truly Christian passover, and bear in our souls the fruits of His resurrection. These fruits are proposed to us in the short extract, which is made from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, and read in the Mass of this day. In consequence of the scandalous conduct of one of their brethren, whom he is compelled to cut off from the society of the faithful, the Apostle takes occasion to recommend to them, that they purify themselves from "the old leaven of malice and wickedness," and that they become as a "new paste," pure and unleavened, models of sincerity and truth.

These, my brethren, are the effects which the resurrection of Christ Jesus should produce in you, and to them I call your attention this day: A strong desire, and earnest endeavor, to renounce all sin; and, secondly, a sincere disposition to be renewed in holiness of life, by a determination to aspire to the perfection of virtue, by an exact compliance with all the duties of a Christian life.

First. In order to participate in the resurrection of Jesus, you well know, my brethren, that as a primary and essential condition, it is necessary that you discharge your consciences of the guilt of sin, and be in the state of God's grace. But that you may receive the abundance of divine grace, and be wholly and permanently transformed into new creatures, you must not satisfy yourselves with merely lamenting your past misfortune, but the most effectual measures must be adopted, that the evil be not incurred in future. You may have confessed your sins, and even detested them with unfeigned sorrow, yet are you not secure against relapse. The evil propensities of corrupt nature are still within us; the inclination to sin, and the force of habit, still remain. The heart resembles an infected vessel, which long preserves the odor by which it is tainted; it is as fire just extinguished; or, to use the simile of the Apostle, it is like a leaven, which, though small in quantity, will, if permitted, corrupt the whole mass of our actions. Now, this is not sufficiently attended to by those who approach the Sacraments at this time, or on other occasions. Having confessed their sins, and renounced their past guilt, they feel a security which makes them regardless of future danger; and the consequence is that a recurrence of temptation is followed by a repetition of guilt. By a worthy participation of the Sacraments we receive grace and strength, but we are not rendered impeccable; we are aided and fortified by the Lord our God, but not exempted from care and vigilance, not licensed to in-

dulge in indifference and sloth. Sin is forgiven, but the seed of sin is not eradicated; the passions are not extinct, they are not destroyed, and unless we observe the strictest attention, and use the greatest exertion, the evil will send forth fresh branches, the fire will again break out and rage with all its former fury. Though pruned, says St. Bernard, they again shoot out; though put to flight, they return to the charge, and renew the assault; though suppressed, they take fire anew; though lulled to sleep, they are again roused; wild and uncontrollable as ever. We have all of us experienced this.

When we have, with sincerity and humility, confessed our guilt, and renounced whatever should displease our God, when we have felt His grace within us, and every sinful object had seemed to be without attraction, has not the danger soon returned, has not even the same temptation, which before subdued us, and which we had flattered ourselves would never more prevail against us, still proved superior to all resolutions?

Let us then examine impartially the state of our interior, and, if possible, discover to what this may have been owing. Has it not been, perhaps, because we have not "purged away the old leaven, the leaven of malice and wickedness"?

Examine well, my friends, what are the predominant dispositions of your hearts, what the prevalent tendency of your inclinations and affections, what the ruling passions of your souls. You may have renounced the evil into which they have seduced you; but while they are unsubdued, expect not to enjoy peace. If they molest you not at present, they will return, and in the moments of confidence, of inattention, they will prevail. Let the young, whose inexperience and characteristic credulity expose them to peculiar danger, be induced to observe a caution that is absolutely necessary, to supply by industry and vigilance the want of experience, and while their passions are yet in the bud, exert themselves in destroying them. How many, by this earnest exertion, might have subdued with comparative ease those early propensities which, by neglect, have grown up, and become identified with their very nature? When first you consented to that vice, which now tyrannizes over you, would it not have been a matter of small difficulty to renounce it? But now, alas! confirmed by long indulgence, it has become habitual, and requires an extraordinary grace on the part of God; and on your part extraordinary exertion. Let all who have borne the yoke of

evil habit, and groaned under its oppression, now struggle for their freedom, and assert their independence; convinced that the more they are indulged, the more powerful do the passions become. Jesus Christ, the strength of the martyrs, will support them in the contest, and give them the victory.

Without this resolute and determined endeavor to overcome all difficulty to cleanse away what remains of the leaven of wickedness, you will not reap the fruit of a truly Christian Pasch; you will not imitate Jesus Christ our passover, as He is named by St. Paul. "Our Passover, Christ, is crucified," says the Apostle, v. 7. As He, the true paschal lamb, was sacrificed on the Cross, and by the effusion of His Blood, merited for us pardon for our sins, deliverance from the bondage of Satan, and all the blessings of grace and glory, so we, by destroying what is in us of the old Adam, by crucifying our passions and evil inclinations, must resemble Him in the sacrifice which He offered on the Cross. This is the meaning of the same Apostle, when he says: "knowing that our old man is crucified with him that the body of sin may be destroyed, and that we may serve sin no longer" (Rom. vi, 6). This is the fruit to be gathered at this time, from the celebration of this our passover, and it is by this that you are to discover whether you have worthily partaken of the Body and Blood of your Redeemer.

Secondly. If St. Paul instructs us to throw off the old man, and to purify our souls from the leaven of sin, he exhorts us also to become the new and unleavened bread: "purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new paste, as you are unleavened." During the whole paschal time, the Jews were commanded by law to make use of only unleavened bread, and hence St. Paul insists, that in the Church of Jesus Christ all ought to be pure, without any mixture of the leaven of iniquity. Being called to Christ, we are called to sanctity. The white garment, which we received in Baptism, is an emblem of the unspotted purity with which the Christian soul ought to be decorated; and the lighted taper, put into our hands, is meant to express the light of faith, and of works corresponding with the faith, of which we make profession. You have received, says St. Ambrose, a white garment, as a memorial and a pledge of your having cast off the slough of sin, and put on the chaste covering of innocence. To urge us to purity of life and conduct, the Apostle also reminds us that our passover has been immolated and slain;

teaching us that we are called upon to imitate the virtues of which He set us an example on the Cross.

In a discourse made by St. Bernard on this Sunday, the holy doctor exclaims: "Our Passover, Christ, is sacrificed"; let us then embrace and practise the virtues which He recommends us in His crucifixion: humility, patience, obedience, and charity. These four virtues were eminently displayed by our blessed Lord in His passion and death, and they are virtues which the Christian should labor incessantly to acquire. These are the foundation of a Christian life, the evidences of a Christian spirit. Confident in the Almighty arm of God, we must encounter danger with humble apprehension of our own impotence; relying only on the efficacy of divine grace, we must neither expect any thing from our own strength, nor attribute any thing to our own merit. Viewing the severe chastisement inflicted upon sin in the person of our Redeemer, and observing His submission and resignation to His Father's will, though manifested in all the rigor of justice, let us learn, on every occasion, to bear, with patient obedience, whatever the wisdom and justice of God shall impose upon us. Considering His unbounded charity toward His creatures, in embracing such exquisite tortures for their redemption and salvation, let us be induced to imitate this His love, by offering Him our heart, with all its affections; and by feelingly compassionating all the necessities, the sorrows, the foibles and defects of our fellow-mortals. Alas! if they suffer, they demand our condolence, whether friends or enemies; if they have faults which make them odious either to God or to man, they are surely to be pitied.

It is now, my Christian friends, that you have the most favorable opportunity of doing that which perhaps your consciences have long told you it was necessary for you to do, if you wished to secure your salvation; of doing that which you have delayed, not from the persuasion that it was unnecessary, but from fear and apprehension, from a dread of the world, from a miserable shame to be truly devout, because in being so you might appear singular. I know that virtue is often exposed to the ridicule and jeers of worldlings; but oh, regard not either the frowns or the smiles of those who, possibly, like yourselves, are withheld from motives of pusillanimity, and only wish to draw you from your purpose, just as they wish to silence the cries of their own consciences, because your conduct is as a troublesome monitor, upbraiding them with what

they likewise are required to do. It is not that they are satisfied with themselves, but precisely because they are dissatisfied with their own proceedings; yet the devil persuades to try to make themselves easy, and to leave the event, as it were, to chance. But this is not a concern to be trusted to a mere possibility of success, particularly when reason and your own consciences convict you of negligence, if not actual guilt; and when religion and God Himself has declared by His prophet, "Cursed be he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently" (Jer. xlviii, 10).

This is the favorable opportunity for destroying the remains of sin, and of eradicating whatever habit or human respect may have ingrafted upon natural perversity. You have contemplated the goodness and love of your Lord, in the astonishing work of our redemption; you have considered how much He endured for us, and from the excess of His sufferings, judge of the enormity of sin which demanded such and so much Blood to expiate its guilt; endeavor to conceive what must be the indignation of the Deity, which required so severe an atonement from the Son of God himself, become a victim of propitiation; and while you form a very inadequate idea of the love of God for man, and of His ardent desire of man's salvation, oh! be induced to make a return of love, nor ever consent to make away with yourselves, while your God conjures you to save your souls, and to be eternally happy. Yes, He presses you to be partakers of His infinite and everlasting glory; and this, I again assert it, this is the most favorable juncture that can occur for renouncing all sin, and aspiring with ardor after perfection, by beginning a new life. You have, during the last week, given more than usual time to the exercises of religion; the practise of them will, therefore, be less difficult; you have, for I can not doubt it, you have been laboring to subdue your vices, and to come nearer to God; the work is then begun, prosecute it with generous fervor, it will become easy and delightful. Nor do I speak to those only who have complied with the duty of paschal Communion, but I admonish and entreat those who have still to perform, to prepare themselves with assiduity for this essential duty. It is principally to you that the words of St. Paul are addressed; from you it is expected that you cleanse your souls from the leaven of malice and wickedness, and be renewed in word and in work. Let it be your labor now to remove from your hearts every sinful attachment, every affection and inclination toward sin; that nothing may pre-

vent you from making a worthy Communion, from participating in the celestial banquet with the unleaven of sincerity and truth. This is the feast of purity and sanctity to which the Church invites you. Let every one of you, my brethren, renounce the evil of sin, and embrace the sweet form of virtue. Without this life is a burden, a state of gloom and sorrow, frequently aggrieved by disappointment and vexation, always devoid of hope in the state of future existence, to which we perceive we are daily carried. Oh, my friends, resolve without hesitation or delay, yield to the voice of God, consent to be happy both in the enjoyment of a good conscience and the well-grounded hope of never-ending bliss in the mansions of the living.

LOW SUNDAY

ON THE CHARACTERS OF A TRUE CONVERSION

"Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world."—I John v, 4.

SYNOPSIS.—The Christian's desire should be to obtain the grace of conversion, and the grace to advance further in virtue. The first duty of the sinner is to forsake sin—to shun the things that lead to sin. The second duty is to detest whatever can offend God. Our third duty is to expiate our offenses by sincere penance. Many are half-hearted in all three of these conditions. Consider the justice of God. This is a terrifying thought. But his mercy is likewise infinite.. This should encourage us to begin at once our conversion or our advancement in perfection. The yoke of the Lord is sweet and eternal bliss is the reward of faithful service.

During these days of joy and exultation to the true Christian, you have, without doubt, my brethren, contemplated the triumphs of your Redeemer; mindful of what I addressed to you last Sunday, you have endeavored to rejoice with your Saviour, and to partake in His victory over your enemies; and by a spiritual resurrection from sin to grace, it has been your object and your aim to unite yourselves to your loving Lord by a new life. But remember what the beloved Apostle has declared to you, that "whatsoever is born of God," etc. Yes, my friends, Jesus Christ and the world are declared and irreconcilable enemies; the precepts of the one are wholly incompatible with the laws and customs of the other; if you be now regenerated by a spiritual birth, if you be now risen from sin, and alive to God, you must be dead to the world and its pernicious maxims. You must, if you really desire to partake in the resurrection of Christ, attach yourselves to Him with inviolable allegiance; to Him you must adhere with unshaken fidelity: "this is the victory that overcometh the world, our faith" (*Ibid.*). The earnest wish of the sincere Christian, at this time, should be to obtain the grace and love of God by a true conversion, if, unfortunately, he has been in the state of God's displeasure; to obtain increase of grace, to be more intimately united to Him, if, happily, sin has been already renounced and forsaken.

To improve in virtue is the professed object of all. Hence, at this sacred season, all who have not abandoned the cause of God

and salvation, are seen approaching to the Sacrament of reconciliation, and to that Bread descending from heaven, which is the Body of the Lord, and of which "except you eat, you shall not have life in you" (John vi, 54). You, my brethren, who hope to have an interest in the suffering of your Redeemer, in the Blood shed to pay the price of your ransom, have approached the foot of the Cross, have there confessed your sins to Him, in the person of His vicegerent, have grieved for your offenses, and promised to reject and renounce whatever can displease your Divine Master. Too frequently, however, does it happen that, forgetful of your resolutions and promises, you again offend, and too frequently does it happen, that even great and grievous sinners, who, after much delay, have been prevailed on to kneel before their Lord and implore His mercy, fall back from their professions and return to their former habits. Let me this day inform you, my brethren, what you are to attend to, if you wish to preserve the grace of God within you, by showing you what are the principal characters of a true conversion.

The first and principal duty of the sinner converted to God is to forsake the sins to which he has been before addicted; and, therefore, one of the most essential proofs of a sincere conversion is a forsaking of whatever has removed us from God; that is, the Christian penitent is necessarily to renounce and to avoid whatever has been found an incentive to sin, whatever appears calculated to seduce him from the promises he has made to his heavenly Father. No longer must he cast a look toward pleasures that he has renounced; no more entertain an affection for past gratifications, which robbed him of the treasure of divine grace; no longer cherish a secret regard for those satisfactions which, being displeasing to God, it was indispensably necessary to abandon; no correspondence must be kept up with sin, through the medium of sinners. Every connection, every tie of inclination or of habit, which is likely to induce to criminal transgression, must be torn asunder.

How often are conversions from sin, as they are represented and believed to be, found to be vain and illusory for want of this indispensable characteristic of sincere repentance. Ah! how often does the minister of reconciliation tremble while he pronounces the sentence of absolution, yielding to the protestations and assurances of the penitent, yet intimidated by the repeated proofs which he has experienced of inconstancy and relapse. But, let me ask you, what has been, too often, your opinion of conversions such as these, for

you are not less able to form a judgment on this head than we are. I ask not for the opinion of uncharitable censure, ever ready to discover blemishes in the conduct of a brother; but I appeal to that opinion which has been forced unwillingly from you, by an evident return to habits and practises, which even the world would reprehend as inconsistent with true virtue; for the world is a shrewd observer, and often marks the incoherencies of those who seem to wish to persuade themselves of the rectitude of their conduct, while they indulge in certain privileged commissions or omissions, which the world clearly discovers to be incompatible with the character of a real servant of God, or a sincere penitent. If they observe an acquaintance, engaged in habits that are clearly criminal, or living through the year in cold indifference, unfeeling apathy, as to what concerns the honor of God, the promotion of religion and the salvation of souls, if they observe such a one approaching to the holy Sacraments at the time of Easter, and returning from the holy table filled with the all-consuming and never-ceasing fire, which penetrates the reins and the heart of the devout Christian, and yet cold and insensible as before; if they notice the same sentiments, the same conduct in every particular as formerly, till the next return of the Christian passover calls again to confess, but not to renounce, the accustomed practises; what is their opinion of these penitents? Do they see in them the models of a true conversion? Do they behold in them the conquests of divine grace, the triumphs of religion? Or, when persons of timid character and disposition are occasionally alarmed by the intruding thought of a future judgment and a fearful eternity, are, for a short time, intimidated by the apprehensions which conscience suggests; or roused by a sense of danger, by a yet unextinguished spark of religion, yet living in the inmost recesses of their hearts—when these seem to take for a while some measures, which serve only to tranquilize their minds, and are then abandoned and forgotten; what idea can be formed of them? Alas! their adopted plans are no more than passing projects, which play, as it were, on the surface of the soul; their resolutions, if they really form any, are but inefficacious desires, which allow certain velleities to remain in the heart, even in the extremity of old age; certain imaginary ideas of future conversion, while the reality of guilt is persisted in, even to the grave.

Accompanying, or rather preceding, this renunciation of sin, and the occasions of sin, is to be discovered, as a proof of sincere repent-

ance, a thorough detestation of whatever can offend God. By this I do not understand those gloomy disquietudes of mind, that baneful dejection of spirits, which are the almost inseparable attendants upon guilt, but a perfect disgust and holy aversion, a saintlike horror for whatever attacks the goodness of God who can not endure iniquity, an abhorrence for that evil which robbed our souls of the love and friendship of the best of Fathers, the kindest and tenderest of Masters. Alas! shall we consider as true penitents those of our days, who far from hating and detesting sin, recall to their recollection those criminal pleasures, those days of vanity and dissipation which were the cause of all their misery; recall them, I say, with fond affection and tender complacency? Who keep up a certain intelligence, if not with sin, at least with the accomplices of their guilt; who, instead of unreservedly breaking with the world, meditate and contrive resources by means of which they may still, with a decent appearance of reserve, and with the connivance of conscience, occasionally allow themselves a participation in its vain amusements? If these be true penitents, if their conduct present to our view models of sincere conversion, if heaven be promised to such converts, what becomes of that otherwise alarming sentence of Jesus Christ, "Many are called, but few are chosen." (Matt. xx, 16). Pardon, my friends, the effect of my regard for you; if I wish to intimidate you, it is not that I may load you with unprofitable reproach; if I wish to rouse the sinner, it is for his salvation; and truly I may here say with the Apostle to the Corinthians, "not that I may confound you do I say these things, but I admonish you as my dearest children" (I Cor. iv, 14). And have I not, at this time particularly, reason to guard you against the dangers of relapse, when you have, so many of you, renounced your sins in my presence; when you have made me, in some measure, the pledge of your fidelity; when in the name of our God I absolved you from your sins; and when your conversion is to be my consolation and support under the heavy, the tremendous responsibility attached to my office. Imagine, then, that at this moment in which I now address you, the exterminating angel was entering upon his awful ministry; that the last and fatal trumpet resounded through this temple of the Lord, and summoned us to stand before the face of God in judgment; what would then be our fears, my brethren, what our consternation? For I do not wish to forget myself in the contemplation of this dread catastrophe. At the sight of the

eternal separation of the just from the unjust, what would be our consternation as the forerunner of the Supreme Judge proceeded in marking out the objects of God's complacency, and the victims of His vengeance. Where are you, ye just? Rise, and place yourselves on the right. Wheat of Jesus Christ, be ye separated from the tares, that you may be gathered into His barn, while the tares shall be cast into unquenchable fire. Oh, where would be our lot in this separation? Would the majority of us here assembled be of the happy number? Would the numbers be equal? Would there be amongst us even ten just persons united to God by the bands of grace and charity? Thou alone, O searcher of hearts, knowest who are thine; but it is to be feared that many of us who now live in undisturbed security, in the enjoyment of a false peace, would be cut off from the society of the just, and from God forever.

My brethren, a third requisite to sincere repentance, and the mark of a true conversion, is the endeavor to redeem the lost time, and to expiate our sins by works of penance. Whatever may have been our offenses, whether amongst the number of those which are committed with shameless effrontery in the face of day, or of those which are still perpetrated with secret shame and confusion; whether such as the world beholds us openly committing, or such as are known only to ourselves and Him whom they provoke; they are sins, and must be atoned for by expiatory satisfaction. Have we bewailed these our transgressions? Have we done penance for them? Perhaps we console ourselves that our sorrow and satisfaction have been complete; while our conduct, if looked into, is of a nature rather to alarm than to encourage. What have we done? On what do we rely? Perhaps on an examination of conscience made with precipitate hurry, after a long absence from the tribunal of penance; a recital of sins committed, vague and indeterminate, marked even in its expressions with the character of indolence in research, and of indifference as to the crimes that have been discovered; without any of those sorrowful regrets which are essential to contrition; of those generous and heroic sentiments which bespeak a disposition to make any sacrifice for the destruction of sin; of those proofs of unfeigned and genuine repentance: of those meritorious self-denials; of those glorious renunciations which testify our readiness to do as much for God as we have done for the world. If we rely on conduct like this, we may silence the loud

cry of conscience; but greatly have we to fear that we are not truly converted to God, that we belong not to Him. In one word, our penance should be proportionate to our guilt, detaching our hearts from all sin and all the works of sin; a penance annihilating, or, at least, subjugating our passions. "Very few indeed," says a spiritual writer, very few indeed do penance for their sins; unless, perhaps, you rank in the number of penitents those persons who, from satiety or disgust, are guiltless of *enormous* irregularities, yet deny themselves none of those gratifications which the world authorizes and approves; who are innocent of intemperance, yet slaves to their palate, by an epicurean delicacy; who are strictly observant of external propriety, but in every thing seek and follow their own will and inclination. "Ah!" continues the same author, "by what unheard of interpretation shall we pronounce or imagine those to be real penitents, true converts to God and virtue, who have just enough of religious fear to prevent them from the character and conduct of professed and avowed sinners? Shall we suppose that God, jealous of His rights, and an implacable enemy to sin, will receive, as reparation for the outrages committed against His infinite holiness and majesty, those ordinary satisfactions, those lukewarm prayers, those niggard alms, bestowed in a spirit which robs them of all claim to the appellation of charities; those cold confessions, all of similar form and character; in short, those superficial sorrows; those resolutions made up for the occasion, and sure to be disregarded. Oh, heaven! thou seat of eternal bliss and glory, is it by these means that thou art to be gained, and yet art said to suffer violence, and only to be won by those who offer violence to themselves—if on terms so easy; men, guilty, perhaps, of the most heinous offenses, can make worthy satisfaction for their sins, and appease the wrath of heaven, correct the sacred Scriptures, erase from its hallowed pages the menaces contained against sin and sinners, expunge the majority of its unaccommodating oracles." Oh, my beloved friends, if this alarm you, remember that they are not words of my invention, but founded upon the authority of eternal truth. But, at the same time, remember that the God of infinite justice is the God of infinite mercy, and that in this world His mercy shines forth beyond all His other attributes. His mercy prevaileth through time, His justice ruleth throughout eternity.

If we incur the severity of His justice, it is neither because we are ignorant or devoid of the means by which we may avert it.

"The Lord waiteth," says the prophet Isaias, "that he may have mercy on you" (xxx, 18). He earnestly wishes, and urgently invites the sinner to avail himself of His merciful dispositions. "As I live," saith the Lord God, "I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way, and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; and why will you die, O house of Israel? . . . The justice of the just shall not deliver him in what day soever he shall sin: and the wickedness of the wicked shall not hurt him, in what day soever he shall turn from his wickedness" (Ezech. xxxiii, 11). "There shall be joy in heaven," says Our Lord, "over one sinner doing penance" (Luke xv, 7).

At the same time, however, that God is declared to be compassionate and merciful, and will forgive sins in the day of tribulation; "Wo to them that are of a double heart, and to wicked lips, and to the hands that do evil, and to the sinner that goeth on the earth two ways" (Eccli. ii, 14). "If we do not penance, we shall fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men" (*Ibid.* 22). Let us, therefore, my dear brethren, rejecting all uncertainties and half-measures, by which we may be led into irremediable misfortunes, determine to pursue the work we have begun, and thus to "make our calling and election sure" (II Pet. i, 10). How many have been inspired to enter generously upon a life of virtue, and have felt within them the power of the Holy Ghost, and the fire of His spirit, but by hesitation, and fear, and delay, have laid themselves open to danger, and have perished in it.

If you have at this time meditated upon a life of regularity, and determined on a plan of conduct, do not defer the execution of your resolves; you can not have a time more favorable than the present; and if to-day you put it off for want of disposition, how will you be better prepared to-morrow? You have entered upon a new life, walk warily, "in the word of truth, in the power of God, by the armor of justice on the right hand and on the left" (II Cor. vi, 7), and as St. Peter has written (I Peter ii, 1), "laying aside all malice and all deceit and dissimulations, and envies and all detractions"; as new-born infants desire the spiritual milk without guide, that thereby you may grow up unto salvation; if so be that you have tasted that the Lord is sweet.

Oh! if you have experienced His wonderful sweetness, if you have known some share of that exquisite delight, which grows in the enjoyment, increasing desire, while it increases the bliss of fru-

ition, till it fills and overpowers the souls of God's faithful servants, with love and rapture; oh, if you, who are but as babes in the science of charity, have found such sweetness in the milk of which He has given you to taste—be encouraged to proceed in what you have begun; draw nearer to the God of all consolations, be nourished by the solid food of His divine grace, which will enlarge the powers of your soul, and confer the strength of perfect manhood. If you have had the grace to break your bonds asunder, to go out from the land of Egypt, if you have been safely conducted through the sea of difficulties, in which so many suffer shipwreck, sing a canticle of joy to your Almighty deliverer. Let me say to you, in the words of St. Paul, "my brethren, dearly beloved, and most desired, my joy and my crown; so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved" (Phil. iv, 1). If you are surrounded by great dangers, you possess powerful means of obtaining succor; danger will only serve to make you more cautious, causing you to remember your own weakness, and to make you shun the occasions of sin. The same will cause you to oppose the light of faith, and the constant practise of good works, to the temptation of disgust and despondence. Thus strengthened by the Lord our God, you will walk in His path, the path that leads to immortal glory and happiness.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

ON THE DUTIES OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD

"I am the good shepherd."—John x, 11.

SYNOPSIS.—Jesus, by His love and care, has proven Himself to be our good shepherd. The good shepherd knows his sheep; He knows us intimately. He feeds the sheep; Jesus feeds us with His own body. He watches over and protects the flock. Our Saviour watches over and protects us. He gives up His life for His flock. The story of the passion and crucifixion tells us how our Shepherd redeemed us. What we owe to our good Shepherd. We must know Him. We must obey Him. We must follow Him. We must even be ready to die for Him. Prayer to the good Shepherd.

The love which Jesus Christ bears for His disciples, and the tender regard which He has for their welfare, are strikingly exemplified in the character of a good shepherd. At this season of mercy and reconciliation, when, having commemorated the goodness of our Redeemer in His passion and death, His triumph in rising from death to life, the faithful Christian, and the sincere convert have, with unfeigned devotion, dedicated themselves forever to the service of God, the Church endeavors by every means to preserve her children in the possession of God's grace, and to attach them inseparably to Him. With this view she has selected for this Sunday the Gospel you have just now heard; and what motives can tend to unite us more closely to our true Shepherd, the Pastor and Bishop of our souls (as He is called by Saint Peter), than those of love and gratitude, for all that He has done and suffered for us? It is only because these irresistible motives are overlooked, that men forsake their best and only interests, turn from the fountains of living water, and seek to quench their thirst with the troubled waters of earthly pleasures.

Men do not pursue iniquity with the determined view of displeasing the God who made them, redeemed, and preserves them; but, led away from the consideration of all His mercies by vanities and lying fooleries, they often quite forget the author of all their good, the support of all their hopes, the source of every terrestrial and eternal blessing. "With desolation is all the land made desolate,

because there is none that considereth in the heart" (Jer. xii, 11). To wean our affections from the fleeting and noxious joys of this earth, to enkindle in our breasts a love of our Deliverer, the great conqueror of death and sin, and to animate us in the career of His service, I shall take a short view of the faithful and affectionate manner in which Our Lord has fulfilled all the duties of a good shepherd, and show you how you are to conduct yourselves as sheep of His pasture.

The duties of a faithful shepherd are distinctly detailed to us by Our Lord, and are seen to have been fully discharged by Him. It is the duty of a good shepherd to know his sheep, and to feed them; to guard them from the dangers of noxious pasturage, and by every attention to heal their distempers. It is for the good shepherd to suffer, for their sake, fatigue and hardships, to defend them from the incursions of the wolf; and not to fear exposing himself, in order to preserve his flock, or to bring back the unfortunate wanderer to his fold. "I am the good shepherd," says our blessed Saviour, "and I know my sheep." Yes, He knows all who belong to Him, He has them ever present to His mind, and watches over them. The poor as well as the rich, the infant smiling in the unconsciousness of danger, and the old man trembling with the fears of helpless age; are all objects of His pastoral care and solicitude. He knows what we are by the frailty and corruption of our nature, and what we are capable of, by the aid of His grace; the good and the evil that are in us He knows; our temptations, our struggles, our falls, our conquests. How consoling to reflect on this His knowledge. But how strict a guard should it cause us to observe over all our actions, our words, and our very thoughts, which are all known to Him. Knowing all our wants, He is ever ready, with most endearing tenderness, to alleviate our sorrows, if, true to Him, we seek our support, our help and defense, at His hand.

Like a faithful guardian of a flock, who provides them with suitable nourishment, leads them into green pastures, and preserves them from every noxious herb and plant, He feeds our souls with holy inspirations, with His heavenly graces, with salutary instructions and with edifying examples, which He sets before our eyes. But not satisfied with this proof of regard for us (such is the effect of His love, such the force of His infinite power and wisdom), He feeds us in the Sacrament of the Altar even with His own Body and

Blood. For this His astonishing charity what acts of thanksgiving are not due from us; what return of homage and devotion, to prove our gratitude for His ineffable mercy?

You have experienced this His love in the feast of the Christian passover; you have been seated at the table of your Lord, and been nourished by His precious Body and Blood. Oh, let not His Body be immolated, His Blood be shed in vain. Great is our inheritance, wonderful the legacy He has bequeathed us. Let us contemplate our Saviour here below with the eyes of faith, that we may behold Him face to face, without shadow or change, for all eternity in His kingdom; let us feed upon this heavenly manna, while journeying through the wilderness of a wretched world, that we may enjoy Him forever in the land of promise, the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Reflect, my friends, on the perils to which you are here exposed, both as to soul and body, and admire the vigilance and assiduous care of this Shepherd of your souls, Christ Jesus, Our Lord.

With what unceasing love does He not watch over us; guarding us against our restless enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh. What means has He not established to secure us from sin and restore us to grace. When temptation assaults us, He is near at hand, and if we call on Him He will protect us from danger. For us He has instituted the holy Sacraments, as channels by which His grace is conveyed to our souls, preserving us from sin, strengthening us against our spiritual foes, and leading us to happiness. But oh! the charity of our blessed Redeemer. "The good shepherd layeth down his life for his sheep"; and Jesus has died for us! How can we contemplate the great and numerous sufferings which He endured for man, and not be ready to make every return, which our poverty and inability can make, for so much goodness.

To free us from the misery of sin, and the punishment due to our guilt, He refused no ignominy, He shunned no suffering; but nailed to the hard wood of the Cross He bled for us, He died for us, and "by his bruises we are healed" (Is. liii, 5). "He bore our sins in his body on the tree," says St. Peter, "by whose stripes ye are healed; for ye were as sheep going astray, but ye are now converted to the Shepherd and the Bishop of your souls" (I Pet. ii, 24). What return of grateful fidelity do you not owe Him. For it was He who called you from the paths of ignorance and error, in which ye strayed; who sought you in the by-ways of sin and iniquity,

in which ye wandered; who brought you back upon His shoulders, and after all His other favors, feeds you with His own body and Blood. Adore your Lord under the character which He has pleased to assume, and has so faithfully borne for your sake, the Shepherd of your souls. "Come, let us adore him; for he is the Lord our God, and we are his people and the sheep of his pasture" (Ps. 94).

If our Divine Master has marked out the qualities of a good shepherd, and exhibited them in himself, He has also signified to us what are the duties and obligations of obedient sheep toward their shepherd. Their first duty is to know Him: "I know my sheep, and mine know me." The knowledge of Jesus Christ is of indispensable necessity to all Christians. You must believe and acknowledge Him for your God, the Son of God, equal to His Father, as to His divine nature; and as to His human nature, true man, born of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Your knowledge of Him should resemble the knowledge which He has of you; it should make you frequently think on Him, not only when in His holy temple, and peculiarly in His presence, but also on other occasions, in the common occupations of life, in your work, in your amusements, which must be always such as to be approved of by Him; in your conversations, which should always be innocent; in your houses and on your journeys, at home and abroad; in short, in every employment; for says the Apostle St. Paul (I Cor. x, 31), "whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all for the glory of God." Can your consciences bear a favorable testimony to your conduct in this respect? Or may not our Saviour say to you, as heretofore to Philip, "have I been so long with you, and have you not known me?" Has Jesus been so long proclaimed to you as your Redeemer and your God; have all His mercies been so often announced to you, and have you not yet known Him with that practical knowledge, that knowledge of charity, which makes His sheep obedient to His voice?

This is the second duty of the sheep toward their shepherd, as mentioned by our Saviour: "my sheep hear my voice." What is this voice of the true Shepherd of your souls, and how is it communicated? Oh, it is expressed to you by a thousand different ways; by frequent interior lights, by secret warnings and inspirations; by the goad of conscience deterring from the commission of sin, and the strong impulses of divine grace urging to virtue. It is signified to you by us, His appointed ministers, exhorting you to turn from vice

to virtue; reminding you of what He has done and suffered for you; pointing out to you with powerful persuasion the narrow road which leads to immortal bliss, and dissuading you from pursuing that spacious road, strewn with flowers, which will soon lose their fatal sweets; that road which terminates in hell and endless misery. Sometimes He addresses you in gentle whispers, and tender invitations; at other times He speaks by His menaces and punishments.

Affliction, disappointment, the ingratitude of friends, sickness, with every earthly sorrow, are the organs by which He calls you to Himself. You have heard His voice, my brethren, in various ways; but have you not shut your ears against it? And has not your obstinate disobedience made you unworthy of being numbered amongst the sheep of Jesus Christ? Oh! hearken now to His voice, and if this day He speak to your souls by my voice, if while I am addressing you He press you, in secret but powerful inspiration, to seek the things that are for your peace, harden not your hearts, but obey His summons and follow Him.

This is the third duty of His true sheep: "the sheep follow him, because they know his voice." Hence St. Peter, in the epistle of this day, tells us that "Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow his steps" (I Pet. ii, 21). Examine well, whether you hear His voice and follow Him; treading on His steps by patient suffering, and the performance of all those things which, in your situation, He requires of you. It is by this compliance in all things, with the divine appointment, that you prove yourselves followers and imitators of your great model, and as your Shepherd has declared that He lays down His life for His sheep, so should you be ready even to resign life, with every joy and blessing which life affords, for His sake. Yet how few are so disposed. How few who follow His example in sufferings, in losses, in neglect or contempt? And if so few support with resignation these smaller trials, how can they be prepared to lay down their lives for Him?

Yet there should be in us all this disposition to suffer every evil, and even to die, rather than abandon our great Master, our Sovereign Lord. Without this disposition, we can not have that love of preference essentially necessary for a perfect Christian; we can not love God above all things. A trivial misfortune dejects us; a slight contradiction raises a storm within our breasts; the raillery of the world makes us ashamed to profess our faith, though we know with certainty that it has God for its author; a little ridicule makes

us blush at religion and virtue; and, like St. Peter, almost deny Our Lord and Master; and can we persuade ourselves that we are ready to give our lives for Him?

Oh, my beloved brethren, let us henceforth be faithful followers of Christ, docile and obedient to His voice, walking in all His ways. Let us intreat Him to "create in us a clean heart, and to renew a right spirit within our bowels" (Ps. l, 12). Cry out to Him with humility and contrition: "I have strayed like the sheep that was lost; seek thy servant" (Ps. cxviii, *ult.*). You who at the late solemnity have again entered the fold of Christ, and been received by Him, no more go astray from your heavenly Shepherd, remain under His guidance and protection, and you will be secure. For of His faithful sheep He has said: "I give them eternal life, and they shall not perish forever; and no one shall snatch them out of my hand" (verse 28).

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

ON DISENGAGING OUR AFFECTIONS FROM THE WORLD

"A little while, and you shall not see me: and again, a little while, and you shall see me, because I go to the Father."—John xvi, 16.

SYNOPSIS.—Sense of the text as used by Our Lord. The encouragement it gives. The lesson, viz., short duration of life. Scripture and reason prove this. The disappointment of all who seek satisfaction in the pleasures of this life. The living and the dead, particularly the damned, support this view. Some use the shortness of life as an argument for self-indulgence. This is against reason. The body shall soon die; the soul shall never die. Hence the importance of the things of eternity. The law of the Cross must be the law of the Christian. Trials and tribulations will be compensated for in eternity.

The Gospel which I have just read to you, my brethren, is a part of that affecting discourse which our Divine Lord made to His Apostles the evening before His passion, and after having eaten with them the paschal lamb, and instituted the eucharistic Sacrament and sacrifice, Christian passover. When He mentioned to them, that in a little time they should not see Him, but that His absence from them would be only for a short duration, they could not comprehend His meaning. The sense of the passage is thus given to us by St. Augustine: The time is now at hand when I shall leave the earth and ascend to my heavenly Father. I shall be put to death by the malice of my enemies, but I shall rise again; you will see me, from time to time, after my resurrection, but my abode among you will be short; after forty days I shall be "taken up to heaven in your sight. Then shall you lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice"; you will be treated with scorn and contumely; men will "revile you and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you" (Matt. v, 11); but be ye comforted "for yet a little while, and you shall see me again." When the "figure of this world shall have passed away," you shall again behold me; I shall then come to judge the world; my presence will inspire gladness into your souls; "your sorrow shall be turned into joy, your hearts shall rejoice, and your joy no one shall take from you." What a source of encouragement and comfort is here given to the Christian! What inducement not to

labor with so much solicitude "for a food that perisheth, but for that which endureth forever" (John vi, 27). We are taught to reflect that our mortal life is of short duration, as it were of a moment; that while we are here below, we are from home and in a state of banishment; that there is another and better world, a world without end; to which, therefore, all our views should be directed. Let us for a while, my friends, indulge these reflections, most worthy of Christians and children of God; reflections calculated to take off our affections from transient and delusive objects; to comfort us under adversity; in prosperity to restrain and regulate us; to nourish in us sentiments of piety, and to direct all the energies of our souls to the possession of God in a happy immortality.

It is not a task of difficulty to convince men of the shortness of life, and its attendant sorrows. A moment's reflection upon what is every day passing before our eyes, is evidence irresistible that all which is here below is quickly transient; and that human existence is checkered with many miseries. If it present a few seeming joys, these are of very short duration, and generally embittered with much vexation. The ancient patriarchs, whose lives were protracted far beyond the period now allotted to mankind, felt and acknowledged the shortness of life and its afflictions. We read that Jacob, when interrogated by the king of Egypt concerning his age, made answer: "the days of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty years, few and evil" (Gen. xlvii, 9). The royal prophet pathetically describes our situation on earth, and the sorrows that await on man. "In the morning," says he, "he shall grow up like grass, in the morning he shall flourish and pass away; in the evening he shall fall, grow dry, and wither . . . our years shall be considered as a spider. The days of our years in them are three-score and ten years; but if in the strong they be four-score years, yet what is more of them is labor and sorrow" (lxxxix, 6 and 9). "What is your life," says St. James (iv, 15); "it is a vapor which appeareth for a little while, and then shall vanish away." Men as a rule do not attain to the age which David mentions as the term of human life; many are seen to drop in early youth, like blossoms in the spring; many perish in the bud, just appear to gladden the hearts of their fond parents with expectation, and then are torn from their bosoms. How many are carried off like unripe fruit, before they have reached the fulness of manhood! How many, when just arrived at that period, just beginning to display their strength and

talents in the full flow and enjoyment of health, and the completion of manly vigor! Though we are all firmly persuaded of the shortness of life and the emptiness of all terrestrial enjoyments, yet we look forward in hope of tasting satisfactions we have not yet experienced. The young pity the sorrows of the aged, and smile at the ridiculous attachment they evince for pleasures which they can not relish; and, nevertheless, are themselves so inconsistent as to indulge vain hopes of finding something in life that will give content, though reason tells them that what they now enjoy, little and unsatisfactory as it is, will never be surpassed.

Have you not always been thus expecting, my brethren; have you not, from your earliest recollection, been, as it were, upon the look out for joys, which imagination pictured at a distance, and fond hope persuaded were surely in reserve for you? The child looks forward, with eager desire, to those pleasures which it fancies are enjoyed by its elders; still, as we advance in years, the pleasing vision is ever before our eyes, always receding, yet always imagined at no great distance, soon to come within our grasp. But let us enquire of them who have lived what is called a long life. We shall hear them assuring us that their many years (if many they can be called) have passed away with inconceivable velocity; that, with a single glance, they can embrace the whole interval of time, from the unimportant amusements of their playful childhood, and the scarcely remembered days of infancy, to their present decrepitude; that the retrospective view appears like the unsubstantial picture of the half-forgotten dream; that, like yourselves, they have always been looking forward to happiness which they have never possessed; that in the eagerness of expectation, each succeeding year has seemed to pass away with increased rapidity; and perhaps you may discover that disappointment and infirmity have not removed the delusion, but that now, tottering from debility, and scarcely supported by the crutch; the sight, the hearing, every sense impaired and almost extinct, they still indulge a hope that satisfactions yet unexperienced are still in reserve for them. As to what is passed, they will confess that the pleasures of life have either wholly vanished, or can scarcely be discerned, amidst the many cares, sorrows, and disappointments which they everywhere discover.

If from the testimony of the living, we proceed to that of the dead; if we enter in spirit into the monuments of those who have shone with greatest splendor upon this globe; or if, with the wise

man, we descend in imagination into the abodes of eternal misery, and from the wretched captives there detained receive instruction, we shall be compelled to regret that the illusions of vanity have ever seduced us; and if we be not yet enslaved beyond the power of admonition to reclaim us, we shall resolve to give up the false joys of a moment, and seek those which are real and eternal; we shall tear ourselves away, whatever violence it may require, from pleasures which lead to irretrievable woe, and, once for all, dedicate ourselves to the end for which we were created. From the dungeons of black despair and never-ending torment will they say to you, contemplate the wretchedness of our fate, which we have brought upon ourselves, by our own obstinacy and folly; see what pride and vanity have entailed upon us. "What hath pride profited us, or what advantage hath the boasting of riches brought us? All those things are passed away as a shadow . . . as a ship that passeth through the waves . . . or as a bird that flieth through the air . . . or as when an arrow is shot at a mark, the divided air presently cometh together again, so that the passage thereof is not known. Thus we also being born, forthwith ceased to be; and have been able to show no mark of virtue, but are consumed in our wickedness. Such things as these," continues the wise man, "said the sinners in hell" (Wisd. v, 8, etc.). Let us learn from their fatal experience, that by a false indulgence in the vain and criminal gratifications of this world, by yielding to sensual and carnal satisfactions, we shall, like them, lose the everlasting joys of heaven, and plunge ourselves into an abyss of unutterable and inconceivable woe. Convinced of the shortness of our sojourn on earth, and the insufficiency of all its resources to give content, let us not reason, like those represented in the second chapter of the same book of Wisdom, who, from the consideration of the shortness of this life, resolved to gratify every craving of inordinate passion, regardless of futurity, and all its goods and evils. (The whole chapter is well deserving our perusal and consideration.) "They have said, reasoning with themselves not rightly . . . the time of our life is short, and tedious . . . our time is as the passing of a shadow, and there is no going back of our end . . . Come, therefore, and let us enjoy the good things that are present . . . let us fill ourselves with costly wines and ointments, and let not the flower of time pass by us. Let us crown ourselves with roses, before they be withered . . . let none of us go without his part in luxury;

let us everywhere leave tokens of joy, for this is our portion, and this is our lot" (II, 1 and *seq.*).

How exactly does this represent the conduct of very many; the undisguised language of some, who boldly profess their intention to compensate for the shortness of the time allowed for this life, by the unrestrained indulgence of every passion, thus sacrificing the rich enjoyments of eternity to the short satisfactions of the present moment. In these days of levity, of irreligion, and shameless libertinism, too many act as if this were their determined plan. If they hold not this language in express terms; if they utter not this impious conclusion, their actions denote the disposition of their hearts.

But this is not the reasoning of the Christian enlightened by faith; let it not be yours, my brethren. Religion and unbiased reason dictate other sentiments. Let each of us say to himself, "Time is short; I will therefore extend my views to eternity. Soon will this earth slide from beneath my feet. Oh, I will therefore place my whole dependence upon heaven. This life is embittered with many sorrows; shall I let sorrow succeed to sorrow, and not rather, by patient suffering and virtuous actions, make the afflictions of this life a source of happiness for immortality? So many years have I lived; they have passed away like the flowing stream; short is the time that remains; perhaps but a few days—at most a few short years, and these will glide away with equal rapidity. Then shall I be transported beyond the narrow confines of this world—beyond the boundaries of space, never more to return. Riches, pleasures, pastimes, all farewell forever; for all that is of the earth must be left behind. This corporal structure shall be dissolved—shall become a corpse, a carcass foul and loathsome; the food of worms. Still the whole of me shall not expire! My soul, the immortal part of my being; that particle of the Deity, enkindled by the breath of God, animated by His Spirit, created after His likeness, shall still subsist; shall survive the wreck of nature, and an expiring world. My soul shall break its bonds, and expatiate in congenial freedom, happy in immortality, if enriched with virtue; but miserable throughout eternity if debased by sin! This, therefore, is not my country; this is not my true home. I am but a stranger in a foreign land, while here on earth, journeying toward my true home; the land of my inheritance!" This, my brethren, is the wisdom of heaven; this is philosophy, compared with which all human science is mere ignorance and folly. In this spirit the Apostle St. Paul addressed

the Corinthians, when he wrote to them, saying: "the time is short; it remaineth that they who use the world be as if they used it not; for the figure of this world passeth away" (I Cor. vii, 31). He exhorts them not to look after temporal things, but after those which are eternal. "For we know," says he, "that if our earthly house of this dwelling be dissolved, we have a building of God; a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven" (II Cor. v, 1).

Should the traveler on his journey, amuse himself with constructing a magnificent apartment, to be, when finished, the abode of a single night, and suffer his accustomed dwelling to fall to ruin, he would be justly accounted insane. Yet the conduct of thousands is exactly similar. They erect superb mansions and gorgeous palaces, in which they reside only for the short day of their mortality; but their true and everlasting dwelling, the eternal tabernacles, their heavenly mansions, they wholly and entirely neglect. The frail structure of their body, the mere mortal frame, the prison of the soul, they decorate and embellish with vain solicitude, while the beautiful and valuable ornaments of virtue are disregarded. Their minds are busied about plans and projects, which a breath of wind will overthrow; which, perhaps, are expected to succeed at some future period, which they will never live to see; or they toil and labor to amass those perishable riches, which can never give real content, while they give up all true happiness, wealth, and honor for ever. "O ye sons of men, how long will ye be dull of heart? Why do ye love vanity, and seek after lying?"

My brethren, be not deceived; act not as if you had here a *permanent dwelling;* as if you were to remain here forever. Were this the case; if we had nothing to look for beyond the present life, and this state of existence were to endure forever, then would it be prudent and wise to toil and study, for our well being here below, to amass riches and seek enjoyment. But no; it is not so. Our time here is short, and, as St. Paul notices, "While we are in the body we are absent from the Lord" (II Cor. v, 6), and we who are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened (4); desiring to be clothed upon with our habitation, that is from heaven (2); but we are confident," continues the Apostle, "and have a good will to be absent, rather from the body, and to be present with the Lord" (v, 8). Nor be ye deceived, my brethren, with a maxim adopted by some, and studiously propagated, that a Christian is permitted to seek, on every occasion, all those pleasures and gratifications, which in themselves

are not *vicious,* and whatever enjoyment is not expressly *forbidden.* This is not consistent with true wisdom, and the language of the Gospel; to draw this consequence from the shortness of life, is to forget that there is a life to come. The Christian must not found his system upon the principles either of irreligion or self-love; nor is it according to their maxims he must regulate his plan of morality. It is from the light of faith that he is to receive information, and from these he learns that the Christian, who will "come after Christ, must take up his cross and follow his master; that he that will save his life here, by ease and indulgence, shall lose it hereafter" (Matt. xvi, 24), and that we must suffer and endure on earth, if we hope to triumph and reign with Jesus; for "gold and silver are tried in the fire, but acceptable men in the furnace of humiliation" (Eccles. ii, 5). From these he learns that this short life is given us that we may gain eternal happiness, and that it is by patience and resignation, and a constant resistance made to our passions, that we can alone expect to succeed; for "the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent bear it away" (Matt. xi, 12).

Let me beseech you then, dear brethren, in the words of St. Peter (I Ep. ii, 11), "as strangers and pilgrims, to refrain yourselves from carnal desires, which war against the Spirit"; to raise your thoughts, your affections, your endeavors from this transient world, with all its fleeting and insidious enjoyments, to heaven and its eternal joys; that in all the "sufferings of tribulation, you be not distressed; that when straightened, you be not destitute; if persecuted, you be not cast down, but that you bear about you in your bodies the mortification of Jesus, that the life of Jesus be also made manifest in your bodies" (II Cor. iv, 8 and *seq.*); remembering that "the present momentary and light of tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly, an eternal weight of glory" (iv, 17); and that "the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come, which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii, 18). Let each of us say with holy David, and with the same spirit, " I am a stranger and a sojourner, as all my fathers were" (Ps. xxxviii, 13). And bear in mind those words of the illustrious St. Augustine: "he who does not *grieve* as a pilgrim upon earth will never *rejoice* as a citizen of heaven." Exert yourselves, therefore, in breaking the bonds which hold you to the earth; in extricating yourselves from the soft fetters of sensual and carnal servitude. "Seek the things

that are above, not the things that are upon the earth" (Colos. iii, 1).

If conscience convict you of guilt or neglect, in anything that regards eternity, forthwith and without delay, correct what is amiss; extirpate what is evil. If God and His Holy Spirit invite you to the practise of anything more perfect than you have hitherto attempted, resist not the call of heaven; "the Spirit breatheth where it will" (John iii, 8). Let not the suggestions of Satan, your mortal foe, nor the soft seducements of a deceitful world, nor the insidious blandishments of concupiscence dissuade you from embracing that which religion and virtue invite you to, and which your own reason enforces, as necessarily connected with your future security, and your present peace. Let your sighs and prayers ascend to heaven, and the God of heaven will assist you; be careful that the good things of this world corrupt you not, and labor with incessant assiduity, that the sorrows and tribulations of this life, to which you may be destined by Providence, or the want of its reputed pleasures, which may be your lot, may be compensated by never-ending happiness, and the joys of heaven!

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

ON THE OPPOSITION OF THE WORLD TO THE MAXIMS OF THE GOSPEL

"He will convict the world of sin, and of justice, and of judgment."—John xvi, 8.

SYNOPSIS.—Introduction. Christ denounces the spirit of the world. This spirit still opposed to Christ. No man can serve two masters. Examine what worldliness is.

I. (a) In ways of acting—things the world tolerates and Christianity condemns. Methods of business. Extravagance. Excessive gain. Feminine vanity and lack of modesty. These things in people who have abjured in Baptism the pomps and vanities of the world. (b) In maxims—far from ideals of patriarchs, of early Christians. Ideals of comfort, ease, worldly honor. (c) In language—the frequency of irreligious or double-meaning discourse.

II. Need of careful self-examination. The difficulty of being sure that the poison is really out. Give self wholly to God.

III. Vanity of all things earthly. Solomon, David, St. Ambrose, St. Jerome. Conclusion.

The Gospel of this, as well as of the last Sunday, is taken from the admirable discourse of our blessed Lord to His disciples, previously to His passion. In many parts of it He takes occasion to condemn the world; that is, the generality of those living in this world, and enslaved to its maxims, its follies and vices: He reminds them that they have been chosen from the world and separated from it; that they are no longer of the world, and must expect to be hated and persecuted by it; "they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (xv, 20). But to console and fortify them, he informs them that when the Paraclete shall come, then shall they discover the guilt of those who refuse to acknowledge and receive their Redeemer, "he will convict the world of sin." Then shall they clearly see the justice of their mediator and future judge, who at so dear a price has purchased their delivery from sin and Satan; and will not reject them who have not first rejected and despised Him; and then too shall they behold the nature and equity of the judgment to be passed upon sinners, who, having embraced the party of Satan, shall participate in his punishment. "He will convict the world of justice, because I go to the Father . . . and of judgment, because the prince of this world is already judged." My brethren, the world is

still in combination with the prince of darkness against the children of God; and while the maxims of the world and the spirit of the world are in direct opposition to the maxims of the Gospel and the Spirit of God, we, if we desire to have any part with Christ, must renounce the world in spirit and affection; and if we are constrained to live in the midst of it, we must "use it as though we used it not" (I Cor. vii, 31); for, "if any one loveth the world, the charity of the Father is not in him" (I John ii, 15). As it is acknowledged by all true believers, that the Christian is to be a disciple of Christ, and that none can be a disciple of Christ and a follower of the world, as "no one can serve two masters" (Matt. vi, 24), I shall endeavor to show you what it is to be a follower and partisan of the world; and this I consider the more necessary, because very few are disposed to imagine it possible that they should be of this world, knowing and acknowledging that they who are can have no share with Christ unto life everlasting.

That we may discover whether we belong to this world, against which Our Lord has so frequently pronounced His anathema, we will consider it in three different points of view; in its manners, its maxims, and its discourse; for to belong to this world, it is sufficient if we adopt its fashions and customs, embrace its notions, or speak its language. What do I understand by the ways and manners of the world? My brethren, I do not here mean those scandalous crimes and abominations, which even the world will not presume to justify; but certain accredited practises, which, however general, are nevertheless inspired by concupiscence, and directly contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. For instance, nothing is more common than to see persons aiming at superiority over those of their own state of life; and by a never-ceasing vanity laboring to acquire notice, and obtain pre-eminence. This, my brethren, may be justly considered as one of the usages which the world upholds, but which the spirit of Christianity and pure religion censures and condemns, whenever it reprobates pride and recommends humility. How many practises are there, which, if the minister of God feel bound in duty and conscience to oppose, are not attempted to be defended on any other plea than the authority of custom. It is what every one else does, it is answered, and, therefore, it must be lawful. How many ways and means are adopted to accumulate the mammon of this world, which impartial conscience can not look upon with approbation; how many exorbitant profits in the way of business; how many

gains, which downright honesty would reject, as so many impositions, but which are nevertheless practised, because the whole world does the same? How many refuse to submit to a just and reasonable economy, and spend with inconsiderate profusion for the support of ostentation, pride, and extravagance, money which is not their own, but which has long ago been earned, in the sweat of his brow, by the laboring mechanic, and is, therefore, due to him, whose distressed family is pining, perhaps, in want, that their unfeeling creditor may enjoy the pleasures of life—the luxuries of creation? How is this justified at the bar of conscience, and how is that discerning judge prevailed on to connive at what it can not sanction or approve? I am not single in what I do; on the contrary, every one does the same; nothing is more common in the world. The female, instigated by vanity, or a more diabolical motive, comes forth in attire which innocence would never bear to be exposed in, appears in public before the eyes and in the gaze of many, in form and preparation, which ought to force a blush from herself in secret; in naked disarray, at the description of which she might affect confusion, while she is not ashamed to be the original from which the likeness is taken. Ah! she knows that modesty is cast off with the covering of modesty; she knows that this licentiousness of the age in which we live, is the occasion of numberless interior sins, and leads the way to the most shocking crimes; she knows, too, the *woe* that has been denounced by Christ our Lord against those "by whom scandal cometh" (Matt. xviii, 7); and yet she sacrifices modesty and virtue—to what? To *custom;* to the *fashion of the world;* which is her only plea here on earth, and which by her compliance with it, will prove her condemnation hereafter. In every state we discover particular usages and customs which the spirit of the world has introduced in defiance of the Gospel; as if the duty of the Christian could be regulated by common consent and the commands of God abrogated by the vote of His creatures. "He said to all: if any one will come after me, let him take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke ix, 23). Where then shall be found that state of life; where those privileged orders who may seek the gratification of their passions, the indulgence of their will, their ease, their rest, their enjoyment in all things? "Is Christ divided?" exclaims St. Paul (I Cor. i, 13); and may not I ask is His law, is the obligation or His law divided? Mild and indulgent to some, austere and painful to others? Doth He make exceptions of Jew or Gentile,

of slave or freeman? Has not the rich man renounced in his baptism the pomps and vanities of this world? Oh! if it be your purpose to shun all restraint, and to live without control according to the flesh, why did you embrace the faith and law of Christ? or if you are determined to live according to this world, come, and before the altar which witnessed your solemn engagements, retract your promises, transfer your allegiance with your affections, from eternity to time, from heaven to earth.

Where shall we now find those who like Noe live pure and holy, while "all flesh has corrupted its way?" Like Abraham, true to his God in the midst of idolatry? Like Moses, faithful amongst an ungrateful and perverse people? Alas! the time is long past when Christians, jealous of their religion and its fame, distinguished themselves in the world by their embracing poverty in preference to wealth, humility to ostentation, and retirement to dissipation and earthly pleasures. Yes, those times are past; the contagion of the world has infected the minds and manners of almost all mankind, and few can be found who, bearing the name of Christian, are not slaves to the world, its modes and customs. Whoever wishes to belong to Christ must adopt sentiments very different from those which the world has acknowledged for its own; many there are who pretend not to support all the maxims which the impious seem to have embraced, yet adhere to many which are sufficient to divorce them from a union with Christ and all hope of His future glory; they resign all pretension and, with the pretension, all the desire of earthly grandeur and magnificence. They do well; though perhaps the moral impossibility of ever realizing such wishes may prevent the formation of them; but without pretending to decide on the motive that influences them, while we see them, in renouncing the grandeurs of life, seeking with anxious solicitude all its comforts, when they seek in all things their own ease, must be punctually attended to, must have every thing, as to bed and to board, and to all the satisfactions of life, suitable to their own comfort and convenience, when this is the case, it can not be too much lamented that they have taken up notions which are inconsistent with the doctrines of Jesus Christ, notions which seem to extend to nothing beyond this world, to have no reference whatever to a glorious immortality which is gained by much conflict, by patient suffering and unremitting industry. The sentiments and maxims of the world are erroneous, are vicious. To set ourselves off, to display our qualifications,

whatever they may be, to seek the applause of our fellow-creatures, to resent an injury, and even to attempt the life of a friend, in revenge of a supposed affront, at the hazard of our own, is deemed to be the duty and the mark of honor; while the doctrine of Jesus Christ is to bear with patience, to seek the honor and glory of God, the esteem of heaven, to suffer, to endure insult and persecution for the sake of our God, to consent to be abject and despised, to lay down our life here, that we gain life eternal. If we subscribe to these false notions of an irreligious world, we have no claim to the mercy of Him who died on the Cross for our sins. "He was offered, because it was his own will, and he opened not his mouth; he was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and was dumb as a lamb before his shearer" (Is. liii, 7).

The language of the world corresponds with the sentiments which it espouses. Not to mention the profaneness, the slander, the calumnies, which so often find place in conversation, is a virtue brought into disrepute, by the reflections which it too often has to suffer, by the half approving language in which vice is frequently mentioned, and the indiscreet encomiums bestowed on those who are guilty of it? The riches of this vain world are held up to admiration, its dignities and distinctions are extolled, the jeers of irreligion are admired, youth is seduced by the conversation and conduct of its superiors in age and authority, and the old are confirmed in their errors and vices by mutual encouragement. In vain is it pretended that conversation is more refined, and consequently less dangerous; there may be more art and more hypocrisy, but it does not follow that there is more virtue and innocence than heretofore. The language may be more guarded, but the ingenuity which is displayed in disguising the improper sentiment under expressions of apparent propriety, and, on the other hand, the ready discernment which discovers the latent meaning, however disguised, which is dexterous in extracting a poison from the language of innocence, do not evince a greater purity of heart and sentiments.

So extensive is the dominion of this world, so insinuating are its arts, so enchanting is its slavery, that it will be necessary for you, dear brethren, to survey the whole of your heart, to analyze (if I may be allowed the phrase) all its affections, before you can be satisfied that you are unsubdued by its influence. It frequently happens that persons, owing to circumstances over which they had no command, have been compelled to resign external pomp and

ostentation, to withdraw from the enjoyment of what are called fashionable pleasures, and being thus, unwilling and reluctant, forced into retirement, driven within the limits of economy and moderation, they persuade themselves they are entirely reformed, and really despise that world from which they are excluded; but let them consider well whether they are free from every wish for former follies, whether they do not look back with longing desire, and not of what they have renounced, but of what has been taken from them, whether they are not still as far from God as ever; for as soon as the love of the world is once extinct within them, their hearts will be attracted to God, will cling to Him; for the affections of the heart can never slumber, they will always have an object, and if that object be not the world it will be heaven, if it be not the creature it will be the Creator. Those are not free from the slavery of the world who have retired from its vanities either from necessity or temporary disgust; its pomps and vanities must be renounced in sincerity and in truth; and, in their place, God must be served and loved. Let us resolve, my friends, that we will not suffer ourselves to be held in shameful captivity, but breaking every bond, give ourselves wholly to Him, who can save us from every impending danger, and make us happy forever.

There is nothing in life that can deserve the attention of the Christian, nothing that ought to dazzle his eyes while he beholds the glories of immortality to which he is called and invited; every earthly enjoyment is mingled with bitterness. "I was king over Jerusalem" (says Solomon, Eccles. i, 12), "I heaped together for myself silver and gold, and the wealth of kings and provinces; I made me singing men and singing women, and the delights of the sons of men; cups and vessels to pour out wine. And I surpassed in riches all that were before me in Jerusalem . . . and whatsoever my eyes desired, I refused them not; and I withheld not my heart from enjoying every pleasure, and delighting in the things which I had prepared, and when I turned myself to all the works which my hands had wrought, and to the labors in which I had labored in vain, I saw in all things vanity and vexation of mind, and nothing was lasting under the sun" (v, 8 and *seq., cap.* ii). No, my brethren, "nothing is lasting under the sun"; riches and grandeur which glitter at a distance, yet give no comfort to the possessor; noise and bustle, the attendants of ambition, better calculated to produce confusion than to tranquilize the heart; vain ideas of bliss,

which is only in the imagination of the beholder; vast expenses, but producing no content; artificial pleasures which give no delight, but are a fruitful source of subsequent repentance; such are the boasts of human pride and human glory. Envy not the smiles, the honors, the splendors of the worldly great; the outside luster that surrounds them conceals from your view the anguish of a bleeding heart—and oh! how shortly shall the present blaze which now dazzles the eyes of the multitude, expire in endless darkness. "I have seen the wicked highly exalted," said holy David, "and lifted up like the cedars of Libanus; and I passed by, and lo! he was not, and I sought him and his place was not found" (Ps. xxxvi, 35). Ah! how pitiful is the pride of man! how vain is all earthly consequence! To-day we behold the poor worm basking in the sunshine of prosperity, and to-morrow it is no more. Gone, gone forever! let us then aspire to something more deserving our ambition, and, as St. Ambrose says, learn even in the world to be above the world. "Discite in hoc mundo supra mundum esse." "Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world; all that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh, the concupiscence of the eyes, and the pride of life" (I John ii, 16). And these, my brethren, are our enemies; it is impossible, as St. Jerome remarks, that we can enjoy the present and the future, the delights of this life, and the happiness of the life to come; to be great on earth, and glorified in heaven. Oh, no! the kingdom of Jesus Christ is not of this world; greatly shall we impose on ourselves if we imagine that we are truly converted to God, if we indulge our sensuality, by seeking our own ease, comfort, and convenience in all things. This is to indulge our sloth, which becomes not servants, and we are servants of God, or ought to be, if we expect to be acknowledged by Him; and we must also be *good* and *faithful* servants if we expect to be rewarded by Him, and admitted into the joys of Our Lord. We must neither squander away the talents that He entrusts to our care by giving way to the solicitations of unruly passions; neither must we "bury the talent which he has put into our hand" by indolence and sloth. Not one of us but has duties to perform, and if any of you flatter yourselves that you are not called upon to watch over the conduct or forward the salvation of your neighbor; at least you are to effect your own. You are required to extirpate every inclination to evil, to subdue every vice which ignorance or neglect has made habitual; you are required to live to God, and to converse with Him in fre-

quent prayer; you are required to renounce the world and the things of the world, at least by taking off your affections from wordly things, in all which "there is only vanity and affliction of spirit." Ever remember that "no one can serve two masters, for no one can serve both God and mammon; and what doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Matt. xvi, 26). "Be not conformed unto this world, but be ye reformed in newness of mind. . . . Thus shall you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God, your reasonable service"; and thus, dear brethren, you will save your souls.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

ON THE NECESSITY OF PRAYER

"If you ask the Father any thing in my name, he will give it to you."—John xvi, 23.

SYNOPSIS.—Introduction. The need of public prayer to avert the calamities of the world.

I. The Rogation Days. Their origin in France in the fifth century. The mode of celebrating them. Abstinence, public processions, penance, and charity.

II. Prayer in the name of Jesus—with confidence, perseverance. Public prayer in former days. Alms-deeds.

III. General responsibility for national crimes. God's power and justice not lessened in our day. Penalties also for our own personal sins.

Conclusion. The Ascension. We should tend toward heaven.

To alleviate the sorrows of His disciples, while in this valley of tears, and to console them in the pain of separation from Him, Our Lord directs them to address His heavenly Father, and to present their petitions *in His name,* with a full assurance that their prayers shall be heard. Previously to our celebrating the ascension of our Redeemer, by which He was taken up from earth to heaven, our spiritual parent, the Church of Christ, with no less wisdom than tenderness, admonishes her children of this consoling promise of our blessed Saviour. With peculiar propriety is the present Gospel appointed to be read on this day, because we are in an especial manner called upon to address ourselves to the Almighty in humble supplication, that He will be pleased to avert from us those visible and terrestrial inflictions, which He has so often laid upon guilty nations, and which we can not but acknowledge to be eminently due to the increased flagitiousness, and unblushing depravity of the present times. Oh! it is the duty of all whose eyes are open to behold the barefaced scandals of the age, and whose hearts yet feel for the honor of Almighty God, so boldly outraged by His much loved creatures, to fall down before Him, to bewail the sins of the world, and to invoke His mercy.

But to appease the divine anger, we must appear before Him, not merely in the garb and show of repentance, but with the sentiments

of real penitents, with the fervent dispositions of sincere supplicants. That you, my brethren, may be induced to enter into the spirit of the Church, on these days of mortification and penance, that you may humble yourselves before Him, and offer Him your petitions, proceeding from hearts glowing with love for Him, and with zealous desire for His honor and glory, I shall offer you a short account of the institution of these days, and inform you of the principal means, by which you may comply with the end, for which they were instituted.

The days of rogation are the Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday preceding the feast of Our Lord's Ascension. The word *rogation* signifies *asking;* they are, therefore, days of *petition, supplication* and *prayer.* They were instituted to appease the divine vengeance, and to draw down the benediction of heaven. The origin of their institution is dated from the fifth century, about the middle of which a great part of southern Gaul had experienced the wrath of heaven, by the most desolating calamities. Frequent earthquakes had overthrown the firmest edifices, and fire had made extensive devastations; while issuing from the forests, their usual retreats, whole hordes of ravenous wild beasts, wolves, bears and wild deer, after laying waste the champaign country, made irruptions into populous cities, scoured the streets and market places, and even penetrating the houses of the citizens, devoured or destroyed whatever came in their way. The city of Vienne in Dauphiné suffered more than any other; and every day exhibited fresh proofs of God's anger against its devoted inhabitants. An alarming fire broke out in the city and baffled the efforts of men; but, moved by the prayers of the holy bishop Mammertus, the power of God interfered and stopped its progress.

The evident miracle strongly affected the minds of the people; and the virtuous prelate took this opportunity to make them sensible of the necessity of prayer, compunction and penance, in order to avert the indignation of heaven, so justly provoked by their sins; when on the eve of Our Lord's resurrection, the year 469, while the people, with their bishop, were assembled in the cathedral to perform the divine office, suddenly a second fire broke out in the town-hall and court of justice, a magnificent structure, placed on an eminence and commanding the whole city, which, on that account, appeared in imminent danger of being reduced to ashes. Seized with consternation, the people leave the holy place, each anxious to

preserve his own property from impending danger; the holy prelate remains alone before the altar! There in deep affliction at the unappeased anger of the Lord, still bearing on his flock with undiminished pressure, he conjures the God of mercy to spare his people. Prostrate before the altar, he pours forth his prayers with many tears; and to appease the divine wrath, he engages by vow to establish in his diocese, *rogations* or *prayers,* accompanied with processions and fasts, to be annually observed, for three successive days.

Moved with the prayers and promises of His servant, the Lord remembers mercy, and in the same hour the conflagration ceases, when human hope and human exertion had sunk into despondence; and in a manner, which his successor, St. Avitus, calls miraculous. The people return to the house of God, and hearing from the bishop of the vow he had made, they glorify the Lord with him, join in humble thanksgiving for the signal manifestation of the divine mercy, and the three days preceding the feast of the Ascension, are appointed as days of holy supplication, of mortification and penance. How acceptable this devout institution was to the Almighty, may be perceived from its effects. No more did earthquakes spread desolation over the land; the fires no more committed their baneful depredations; the earth displayed its wonted fecundity, and plenty revisited the afflicted territory.

Such is the origin of the rogations, as related by St. Sidonius Apollinaris, Bishop of Auvergne, and contemporary with St. Mammertus; by St. Avitus, his disciple and successor, and by St. Gregory of Tours, who lived in the following century.

From Dauphiné the institution passed to the adjoining provinces; many dioceses adopted the pious practise; till at length, Pope Leo the Third, who lived at the end of the eighth and in the beginning of the ninth century, established it as a law of general ecclesiastical discipline. For a considerable time these days were kept as festivals, on which it was forbidden to engage in any servile work; they were also fasting days.

Where religion is publicly exercised without restraint, both priest and people, clergy and laity, march in solemn procession, singing the litanies and supplicating God to pardon their sins, to forego His anger, to withhold His judgment, and pour down His benedictions. It is, therefore, without a doubt, the intention of the Church to inspire us, at this time, with sentiments of penance, and to engage

us to redouble our prayers on these days of supplication. Ever solicitous for the welfare of her children, she knows how much this penitential spirit is wanted to appease the wrath of God, to avert the evils which threaten, and those which already afflict us. She is well convinced that prayer, especially public prayer, joined with works of penance and charity to His representatives, the poor, can obtain all things of the Lord; that no time can be more favorable than that which precedes, as it were, the return of Jesus Christ to His Father, when her Divine Spouse will himself present her petitions at the throne of the Deity.

That these days may avert the anger of God, provoked by our manifold transgressions, and may draw down upon us the mercies of heaven, the Church requires of us that we attend, with particular fervor and assiduity on these days, to the duty of prayer; that we assist with devotion at the public service; and assume the sentiments and dispositions of sincere penitents. To animate us to fervor in our supplications, the reproach of our Saviour to His disciples is read to us; and that we may address ourselves to God in the name of Jesus, with confidence of obtaining our petitions, we are invited to call upon God with the strongest assurance that our requests will be attended to. "Hitherto you have not asked anything in my name; ask and you shall receive" (John xvi, 24). In the Gospel of to-morrow (Luke xi, 5), the same is forcibly inculcated, with an implied exhortation to perseverance, by the example of a man entreating his friend, in the dead of the night, to lend him bread to set before his guest who is come off a journey, and, by his importunity, succeeding in his request. By arguments drawn from the effects of *human* tenderness and affection, we are encouraged to confide in the *divine* bounty, compassion and love. Shall a father refuse the prayer of his child in necessity when he asks for bread, "will he give him a stone?"; if he solicits a fish, "will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg, will he reach him a scorpion?" (verse 11). If men, wicked as they are, can not be guilty of such hard-heartedness, shall the Father of all, who is infinitely loving and merciful, refuse to His children those things of which they are in need? "If you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good Spirit to them that ask him" (verse 13). To incline to mercy this universal Parent, this Father of mercies, and God of all consolation, the litanies are sung in solemn procession,

wherever the Church enjoys the freedom of public worship. In the first ages of Christianity, as soon as persecution had ceased, we find the priest and people performing processions with lighted tapers, while prayers were offered to God for the conversion of infidels, heretics and sinners; for the safety of nations; and for public tranquillity and happiness. In the fourth century St. John Chrysostom, at Constantinople, Saint Ambrose and Saint Augustine, speak of the processions performed at Milan, to implore the divine mercy; and not very long after the conversion of our Saxon ancestors, we find our countryman, the venerable Bede, speaking of the processions of these rogation days, and mentioning the relics of saints that were borne with respectful veneration; and these he describes as practises sanctioned by the approbation and established usage of the whole Church.

My brethren, though you can not observe these practises of ancient piety, though it is not permitted us to make the air resound, and the hills re-echo the praises of God, as our forefathers once did; though it is not allowed to us to bear the sacred standard of the Cross through towns and cities, to wave the banner of the Crucified with public solemnity, as our ancestors did on these occasions, still may our suppliant voices be raised to heaven, still may your souls be lifted up to God, and, as St. Paul says (Eph. v, 19), "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns, and spiritual canticles; singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord." To fervent prayer join the abstinence enjoined by the Church; not refraining from certain meats from superstitious dread, imagining, like the Pharisees, that "what goeth into the mouth defileth a man," as of its own nature unclean (Matt. xvii), "for every creature of God is good" (I Tim. iv); nor avoiding certain kinds of nourishment, like the Marcionites, Manicheans, and others, as if they proceeded from an evil principle; but in a spirit of obedience and penance, to mortify the lusts of the flesh, and to comply with the injunctions of the Church of God; because He has repeatedly called upon His people "to turn to him by fasting, weeping and mourning" (Joel xi, 12); has declared "that prayer is good with fasting and alms" (Tob. xii, 8); has been moved to mercy by fasting, as in the case of the Ninevites; and because He hath commanded us to obey the Church, and hear her commands. (Matt xviii, 17.) "Redeem your sins with alms, and your iniquities with works of mercy to the poor" (Dan. iv, 24). Let alms-deeds accompany your

prayer and fasting; many will be cast into exterior darkness, weeping and gnashing their teeth, for their neglect of this duty toward their necessitous brethren, and toward Jesus Christ himself in the persons of the poor. Beg of God that He will avert the heavy judgments which He has often inflicted upon guilty nations, even in this life, when the commission of crime has been so general, as to make it the guilt of all, by the concurrence, connivance and indifference of all. The diffusion of vice having become so extensive as to deluge the whole population of a country, then does the guilt become, by adoption, *national;* and God has punished whole nations, even in this world, by terrestrial, yet dreadful, scourges; by famine, pestilence, earthquakes, fire, and sword, or by other indiscriminate calamities.

Be not you indifferent, my brethren, as if you were not concerned in the evils which menace a guilty world. If you have not experienced the calamities which almost every other nation of Europe has felt; if the march of hostile battalions has not laid waste your plains, trampled down the fruits of your labor, and plundered your habitations; if the carnage of battle has not crimsoned your fields with the blood of your kindred, mixed with that of invading enemies; if your sons have not been given up to the fury, your daughters to the brutal lust of foreign conquerors; if you are still strangers to famine and pestilence, and are exempt from the *horrors of present warfare;* yet remember that these scourges are in the hand of God, that the sins of the nation are immense, that God's hatred for sin is the same as when these rogation days were first consigned to penance, and that His power is not abridged. Above all, remember that the punishment reserved for sin, in the world to come, is still the same, and is only to be averted by penance and humiliation. Throughout the sacred writings we discover that whenever a sinful people sought to make the Lord propitious, and to appease His indignation, they had recourse to united supplications, and to exterior humiliations; fasting with great austerity, and covering their bodies with sackcloth and ashes. Let modern infidels and irreligious scoffers break out in derision of penitential severities, to palliate their own sensuality; let not us, however we may have to lament our own deficiency and immortification, let not us join in the impious cry, but rather beg of God that He would make us see our frailty and sinful baseness, and seek in fasting and mortification support for the one and atonement for the other. Let our faith in Jesus Christ, and

His divine power and mercy, be strengthened; let our confidence in Him be increased, our love of Him inflamed; and let all our actions glow with the ardor of charity. We ought to recollect, at this holy time, that Jesus leaves the earth to return to that heaven from which He descended for the love of man. Of this He clearly informs His disciples, when He says to them: "I came forth from the father, and am come into the world; again I leave the world, and I go to the father" (John xvi, 28). We have celebrated His resurrection, let us prepare ourselves to celebrate, with becoming solemnity and devotion, the feast of His Ascension. Like the five hundred disciples, let us repair to the holy mountain, from whence He ascends to His throne of glory; let us remember His injunctions, and strictly "observe all things whatsoever he has commanded us" (Matt. xxviii, 20). Let us endeavor to pass these days in holiness, entreating our heavenly Lord, that ascending from the earth, He will with uplifted hands give us His benediction; that as the disciples "adoring went back into Jerusalem with great joy, and were always in the Temple praising and blessing God" (Luke xxiv, 52), we may be filled with spiritual gladness and heavenly consolations; that our hearts may no longer be placed on anything here below; but may ever pant after heaven; that desiring to be dissolved and to be with Jesus, we may bear with patience the days of our banishment, yet ever be ready to obey the divine call, and thus rendering our bodies to the earth, from whence they came, we may return our souls to Him who gave them, and, united with Our Lord and Leader in His blessed kingdom, may enjoy the blissful glory of His presence, and in the company of His saints and angels forever sing praises to His name.

FOR THE FEAST OF THE ASCENSION

"And the Lord Jesus . . . was taken up into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God."—Mark xvi, 19.

SYNOPSIS.—Final proofs of Christ's divinity. Disciples retain idea of worldly kingdom. But He returns to heaven. Self-elevated. Enters into His triumph. Said it was good for us that He should go. How?

I. (a) His ascension opened heaven to us. The holy men of old who entered with Him. (b) He has gone to prepare a place for us—for all, without distinction of class. (c) He stands as our mediator before God. (d) He has sent the Holy Spirit. Effects of this on the Apostles—on us.

II. How to gain the fruits of the Ascension. By the exercise of faith—that Christ is in heaven at the right hand of God; of hope—that we may preach to eternal life with Him; of love—of Christ in His glory. Ignatius Martyr.

III. Our lack of faith, desire, appreciation of the services and blessings of Christ. Compare eagerness and perseverance in pursuit of temporal goods.

Exhortation and invocation.

In this manner, my brethren, was terminated the important mission of the Son of God, and thus, after a life of anguish, persecution, pain and suffering, Jesus, victorious over the power of death and malice of hell, now ascends in triumph from this vale of tears to take possession of His heavenly kingdom, His throne of glory on the right hand of His eternal Father. That He might convince His followers of the reality of the character He had assumed, He frequently manifested Himself to them after His resurrection, conversing with them and instructing them in His divine law: but to remove every suspicion of imposture, and to establish the faith of every succeeding age on the firmest basis, Jesus was pleased to give this last incontrovertible proof of His divine power, by ascending visibly before them. Having been witnesses to the most astonishing manifestations of His power, having beheld the blind restored to sight, the deaf to a perfect use of hearing, the dead raised to life, and Jesus Himself, after expiring under the most excruciating torments, again gloriously revived by His own strength, His disciples could not but acknowledge Him for the Messias promised to their fathers, the long expected Saviour of the world, the Visitor and Redeemer of Israel: but with this conviction, they misinterpret His designs; an affection for worldly magnificence and

grandeur still possesses them: they expect to see Him assume the reins of empire, and as king of the earth receive the homage of obsequious nations. Though Our Lord had never failed to discountenance this idea of temporal power, which they had affixed to the Messias, yet were they unable wholly to suppress the flattering hope of seeing their master confound the insults of His enemies by all the splendor of regal authority. Still they expected that he would free the Jewish nation from the weight of foreign dominion, and exalt it above the kingdoms of the earth: even when He was about to be taken from them, they say to Him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom of Israel?" (Acts i, 6). But Our Redeemer while He checks the vanity of their inquiries and wishes, by telling them that it was not for them to know the moments which the Father hath put in His own power (v. 7), yet indirectly answers the question they put to Him, by informing them that by the descent of the Holy Ghost, they should be enabled to bear evidence to His doctrine and mysteries, and be themselves the founders of a kingdom, far different from that which they looked for, by planting His Church, beginning at Jerusalem, and from thence extending it to all the nations of the earth. When He had thus instructed them in the part they were to act after His ascension "while they were looking on him, he was raised up, and a cloud received him out of their sight" (Acts i, 19). They followed Him with their eyes as He arose, and beheld with astonishment this last proof of His divine omnipotence. As He had risen from death by His own strength, so by His own power was He lifted up at His ascension. Not transported to a distance by the ministry of an angel, as were Habacuc and Philip, nor carried up in a chariot of fire as was Elias; but being Himself the author of life and motion, He rose self-elevated, and though multitudes of angels were present, they attended not to lend their aid, but to express their joy, to tender their homage, and grace His triumph. Such, my brethren, was the departure of Jesus from the earth, far exceeding the boasted splendor of pagan triumph, not founded on the misery of a captive nation, nor the bloody spoils of a prostrate enemy, but on the general happiness of mankind, the ransom of the captive and the defeat of death. Though He was no longer visibly present to His disciples, yet the assurance of His continued protection and love, the conviction which His words had afforded them, that it was expedient for Him to go, the promise of sending down the

Holy Ghost the Comforter, joined to the other advantages they expected from their Master when in heaven, soothed the sorrows of separation, and made them, as St. Luke relates (xxiv, 52), "return to Jerusalem with joy." But the advantages they looked for were not to be confined to themselves alone; no; Jesus the Redeemer of all mankind ascended to His throne of glory for the benefit of all mankind: it was expedient for *you* that He should go (John xvi, 7). If so, my brethren, if the advantages to be derived from the ascension of Jesus exceed those of His visible presence, they must certainly be of the last importance; and if important and valuable, as they are, they were designed for all, every Christian must find himself interested in the attainment of them. I design, therefore, to consider (1) the principal blessings resulting from Christ's ascension; but as these can not be received without certain dispositions, it will be necessary, in the second place, to examine what preparation is requisite in order to experience their happy effects.

I. The only consolation to the Christian in his pilgrimage below, is the hope of passing from the prison of mortality, to the regions of life eternal, cheered and illumined by the sun of justice, his Creator and God. It is this invigorating hope which alleviates the weight of banishment, and charms away the toil of our tedious journey. But this well grounded expectation of future happiness and glory was procured for us by the ascension of Our Lord. By His ascension, Jesus opened to man an entrance into heaven, before shut against all mankind: those illustrious personages of the old law, whose eminent virtues are the deserving subject of our admiration, could not be received into everlasting glory, till Christ had unlocked the gates of heaven, and prepared admission for them. The ancient patriarchs, the prophets and priests, whose lives had been the most exemplary and edifying, even the precursor of the Messias, sent by God to point out to the darkened world, the light which shone unobserved in the midst of His people, had not before this time access to the heavenly Jerusalem. Detained at a distance from those blessed mansions, denied the sight of their God whose presence they so ardently longed to enjoy—the ascension of Jesus opened to them that day of happiness which shall know no evening, but preserve its full meridian splendor through the boundless circle of eternity. To their abode of exile He descended after His death, to announce to these holy captives their approaching deliverance, and "ascending on high led captivity captive" (Eph. iv, 8).

He bore with Him these illustrious troops of the just, sounding forth His praises, and thanking their deliverer. "He ascended above all the heavens that he might fill all things" (Eph. iv, 10). But it was not for them alone that heaven was opened, but for all who should die in the grace of God. Christ is received as conqueror, and His victory being over our enemies, His triumph is also ours. No longer to the just is deferred the reward of perseverance, no longer are they detained in anxious expectation of a deliverer to come; but, if pure from guilt, their passage to the realms of bliss and glory, is unretarded, and the same instant which puts an end to their earthly existence, places them in possession of life eternal.

This eternal weight of glory and happiness Christ merited for all; he ascended for each individual, and what He said to His disciples He said to every one of us: "I go to prepare a place for you" (John xiv, 2). For you, my brethren, whatever be your condition or state of life; whether distinguished by pre-eminence of rank, or concealed in the lowly situation of unnoticed poverty; whether on the point of terminating the career of life, or in all the bloom of youthful vigor, just entering upon the flattering journey; for you has Jesus prepared a place in the kingdom of His Father. Before Him no regard is paid to human distinctions; guiltless poverty is not disgraceful in his sight, nor can rank or title protect vice from His vengeance. He beholds with equal approbation the respective virtues of the rich and the poor; the liberality and compassionate feeling of the great, and the submission, industry and resignation exercised in dependence. The simple, unconnected petition of the young and unlettered is no less acceptable to Him, than the more regular supplication of the learned and experienced. For all who are His disciples is He gone to prepare a place; for all who love Him, and fulfil His precepts; even for sinners who have contemned His law, and violated His commands, if, departing from the ways of sin, they will return to the embraces of a fond parent, whose mercies invite them, and whose arms are stretched out to receive them.

Again, Christians, amidst all the temptations to sin, which invest weak human nature, and under every calamity to which life is subject, how consoling the reflection, that Jesus is ascended to appear in our cause before God; to be our advocate and mediator. Nor is it with Him as with the priests of the old law; it is not into a temple raised by the hands of men, that Christ is entered, "but into heaven

itself, that he may appear now in the presence of God for us" (Heb. ix, 24). "He continueth for ever; hath an everlasting priesthood, whereby he is able to save for ever them who come to God by him, always living to make intercession for us" (Heb. vii, 24, 25). Behold here a rich source of comfort! In ascending to heaven, Our Lord has not abandoned us; he has not left us orphans, destitute of patronage and protection, but Himself pleads our cause before the Father; to Him He shows the prints of His wounds, the lasting monuments of what He suffered; the irresistible arguments of mercy to appease His anger, and obtain for us grace and forgiveness. "He is at the right hand of God, and also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii, 34). "Sin not," says the beloved disciple, "but if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the just" (I John, ii, 1). Let not then the sinner despond, though his faults be great, and his own merits nothing; let him still remember that he has an advocate with the Father; there let him apply for succor, throw himself at His feet, and implore His assistance, who is by excellence and pre-eminence the Just; whose merits are infinite.

He has ascended, He is no longer present to our view, but, that we might still be protected against the dangers which incessantly threaten us from the false forms of earthly objects, and from our own corrupt nature, He has sent down His Holy Spirit to fill our hearts, to enlighten our understandings, and raise our affections from things below, by giving us a relish for spiritual enjoyments and delights. This, too, is a happy effect of His ascension. "If I go not," says he, "the Paraclete will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you" (John xvi, 7). Reflect on the greatness of this promised favor, view the promise verified in regard to the Apostles, and contemplate its astonishing effects. Before, timid and spiritless, fearful of every shadow of danger, and almost ashamed of their leader, no sooner had the Holy Ghost descended upon them, than issuing from their retreat in Jerusalem, where they had remained concealed during the ten days which followed Our Lord's ascension, they testified without dismay the divinity of their crucified Master. From this period they contemned the dangers which threatened them from the malice of a jealous exasperated people; they slighted persecution, and despised even death, which seemed to menace them continually. But these advantages were not confined to the favored few, who then experienced their happy influence.

No: they are merited and procured for us also. Each day does Christ send down the same Holy Spirit on His Church, and plentifully bestows His gifts upon those faithful servants who are prepared to receive them. "Ascending on high . . . he gave gifts to men" (Eph. iv, 8). These He continues to distribute with a liberal hand, confirming the weak, comforting the afflicted, animating the dejected, rousing the lukewarm, and urging the sinner to repentance. It is these advantages which serve to compensate the absence of Jesus, and make His ascension more salutary and beneficial to us, than would have been His visible presence. Let not, then, His friends and favorites, if they at any time experience the absence of His sensible consolations, be comfortless and desponding; what He does is not done without design, but with a view to their interest. Let them endeavor, like the disciples, to turn it to their advantage; let them study to apply the fruits of His ascension to their souls, and to profit by them.

II. But how are these valuable blessings to be acquired? for though they were merited for all, and are open to all, still, unless we prepare ourselves for them by suitable dispositions, we reject and despise them. The most assured means of making Our Lord's ascension serviceable to us, is by the exercise of faith, hope, charity and religion. That your faith may be lively and efficacious, it must be elevated to a firm belief, that the same Jesus, who visibly conversed with His Apostles after His resurrection, is truly ascended into heaven, not by any foreign external aid, but by His own power, which, as Man-God, He is possessed of: that He is there seated at the right hand of His Father, and as man is raised above all the choirs of angels and blessed spirits, above all that is not God: that to Him is given all power in heaven and on earth, that to Him we ought to have recourse in every necessity, as to the source from whence are derived all the blessings of grace and glory.

Where this lively faith prevails, there divine hope will speedily diffuse animation through the soul. Yes, my friends, if you firmly believe Jesus to be in heaven, your desires and affections will be transported thither, your treasure being there, your hearts will be there also. A true and solid faith in this mystery will persuade you that as Christ Jesus, who is your head, has fixed His eternal residence in heaven, your thoughts, wishes, and endeavors, should tend to a union with him: faith will assure you that your divine Leader has there prepared a place for you, but that following His example,

you must labor to deserve it. With what ardor ought you to sigh after the happiness which awaits you, and what strength and courage ought hope to inspire. Oh! look up to that glorious kingdom, where Jesus, at the right hand of His Father, sits enthroned in power and majesty: for you He prepares a crown of victory, a throne of splendor, in those realms of glory. The reward of justice is reserved for you, if you will tread in the footsteps of your heavenly Master, and entertain for Him, through life, a sincere and invariable love.

In effect, it is principally by an ardent love of God, an inflamed charity, that the Christian must render himself worthy of the promises of Jesus. And what can be more deserving of our affections! Were we permitted to have some knowledge of the splendor which encompasses Him in His state of glory, of His immeasurable beauty and infinite perfections, what a holy love would glow within us, how ardently should we wish to liberate ourselves from the confinement of our bodies, that we might soar up to a closer union with Him! What should we not be willing to do or suffer, to hasten the enjoyment of fruition! It was this ardor of love which inflamed the breasts of saints, and made them wish for their dissolution, to enjoy their God, the sole object of their affections. Look into the breast of the blessed martyr Ignatius, behold the fire which consumed it. Such was His impatience to possess his Lord, that when condemned to be devoured by the wild beasts for professing the Christian name, he feared they might forget their fury, and spare his life, to be lengthened but at a distance from the dear object of his holy love. He entreats the Christians of Rome, to whom he writes, not to endeavor by their prayers to deprive him of the happiness of suffering for his Saviour. "You have not hitherto been guilty of envy," says the saint, "be not so now . . . only beg for me of God a fortitude interior as well as exterior, that not only my professions may be those of a Christian, but that my will may remain invincible . . . Love me not to my prejudice I conjure you. Suffer me to become the food of beasts, that I may come to the possession of my God. I am the wheat of God, let me be ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may become the pure bread of Jesus Christ. Rather provoke them to devour me, that they may be the tomb of my body. . . . Let me suffer the torments of fire, or the pains of the Cross; let me be exposed to whole armies of savage beasts, let me undergo the dislocation of

every joint, the separation of every limb, the annihilation of my body, and the worse torments which the malice of hell can invent, provided I may at length enjoy Jesus Christ. Though still alive, yet while I write I am in love with death, my love is nailed to the Cross."

Where is such a charity as this to be found among us? How cold and unfeeling are our hearts! How insensible to the powerful motives which conspire to excite in us the most lively emotions of tenderness and gratitude! Can our faith in Jesus be strong and active? Can our hope in Him be firm and steadfast? Were they so, our hearts too would glow with all the ardors of inflamed affection; we should assiduously practise those internal acts which religion inspires; we should dedicate ourselves to Jesus with all the fervor of devotion; we should venerate with profound respect His humanity, raised to its state of glory; we should pay Him every homage and submission; we should adore Him in concert with the heavenly court, and bend in earnest supplication to Him.

But, alas, all the blessings which He has procured for us are either neglected through indifference, or rejected with contempt. We are insensible to the protection He offers us as our advocate and mediator; we value not the consolations of His Holy Spirit; the joys of heaven which He has laid open to us, affect us not; the glory which He has purchased for us, awakens not our ambition. We profess indeed to thirst after those rich streams of life eternal, which flow from the throne of God, yet, with these professions, grasp at the inferior enjoyment of earthly gratifications. For the accomplishment of His temporal views, man defies danger, and struggles against difficulties with all the ardor of heroic enterprise, and all the inflexibility of desperate perseverance: yet unconcerned, languid, despondent, beholds the happy occasions pass by him never to return, which, had he availed himself of them, might have secured to him the possession of endless happiness. To acquire the sordid dust of this world, he gives up present convenience, exposes health and life to all the severity of weather, and all the dangers of unequal climates; he hears the tempest howl above his head, the billows beat against his vessel, death stands before him in all its terrors; still firm and collected, the object he is in quest of calms his fears, and the hope of subsequent possession stifles the apprehension of present danger. All this, Christians, to gain what our own oversight, the malice of others, or the

instability of human affairs, may deprive us of or destroy, and what a few revolving years will infallibly snatch away; yet to purchase the transcendent goods of the life to come, which neither accident, nor fraud, nor malice, nor time itself can rob us of, we shrink from difficulties the most slight and trifling. No sooner have we entered upon a projected reformation, if perchance we proceed so far, but the smallest opposition intimidates us, the slightest contradiction thwarts us, and the least violence offered to self-love or corrupt inclination, throws us into dejection and despondence. Even the contemptible raillery of one who wants, perhaps, but a proof of our resolution to turn the sneer of ridicule into admiration, or, it may be, into imitation of our conduct, gets the better of our weakness, and robs us of those blessings which perseverance would undoubtedly procure us.

Henceforth, however, my friends, convinced of the value of those advantages which Christ has merited for all by His ascension, let nothing prevail upon you to debar yourselves from their enjoyment. Labor to acquire the disposition suitable for receiving those benefits; prostrate before your Saviour, entreat Him to stretch forth His hands toward you, as He did toward His disciples, when He ascended into heaven, and beg of Him to bestow His blessing on you, as He did on them. Beg of Him to disengage your hearts from the love of the world, from sensuality, intemperance, covetousness, injustice, oppression, uncharitableness and revenge. Implore the grace of a new spirit, which may make you labor, through life, in subduing that corruption which is inherent in your nature, which has held you down to the earth, and made you covet what you ought to have despised. Yes, "O blessed Jesus, give us thy Spirit, which may draw us from the earth, where we have so long lain groveling; correct in us every evil inclination, and destroy in us whatever is displeasing to thee. Send down the Holy Ghost to be our comforter and director: thou knowest all our weakness and all our necessities; let thy grace be proportionate to them, that we may no longer lie buried under the earth, but begin henceforward to ascend toward thee, and ever continue to ascend, till we are received by thee into the kingdom of thy peace and glory."

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF THE ASCENSION

OF FERVOR IN THE DIVINE SERVICE

"These things have I told you, that when the hour shall come, you may remember that I told you of them."—John xvi, 4.

SYNOPSIS.—Christianity is a truth to believe; a law to follow; a testimony to offer even in spite of persecution.

I. The method of preaching it. The immediate spread of the new religion. Its service in civilizing the pagan races. The need that we should carry on this work. Our best means of doing so by the sanctity of our lives. The scandal that bad Catholics give.

II. Persecution foretold. But it has not shaken the rock of the Church. Heresies too have been crushed.

III. Similar difficulties may arise in our lives. Bear with petty persecutions and untrue accusations, and live them down.

Exhortation to obedience and long-suffering.

Before our divine Redeemer withdrew Himself from the earth, and ascended to His Father, and even before His passion, He forewarned His disciples of what they were to undergo in the preaching of His name, as well as of the support they were to expect from above. The doctrines they were to announce to the world, were not such as their ingenuity might devise, or their discretion judge to be convenient to the times and circumstances in which they might find themselves placed; not accommodated to the character and genius of particular people, not confined to a particular race, nor varying with the variations of climate: but they were to preach the religion *of Christ,* uniform in its doctrine, universal, as embracing every truth, while remaining pure from the smallest commixture of error; universal also, as being received by all the faithful, of every place and every period, till the end of the world; *holy,* by conducting its followers through holiness, to happiness; and secured, by its divine Founder, against all error, an inheritance transmitted by the Apostles, through their descendants, till Jesus should come again to judge the nations of the earth. "When the Spirit of Truth is come, he will teach you all truth" (John xvi, 13). But it is not sufficient that we believe what our Saviour has taught; our lives must bear testimony to the purity of His law, by the purity of our manners. Whoever professes himself a disciple of Christ Jesus,

must give testimony of Him by a life of exemplary virtue; that he may prove himself animated by the Spirit of God. "The Spirit of Truth," says our Lord, "who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me; and you also shall give testimony of me" (John xv, 27). And St. Peter says, in the epistle of this day (1 Pet. iv, 10), "let every one, as he hath received grace, so minister the same to another, like good stewards of the manifold grace of God." But if we are called to bear testimony to the truth of our faith, we are frequently called to trials on account of our faith, and for the sake of Jesus. Behold He has foretold it to you! "They will cast you out of their synagogues, and whoever killeth you, will think he doeth God a service" (John xvi, 2). Let us, my brethren, animate ourselves to fervor in the service of God, by the consideration of our being called to give testimony of Him to the world; and let us arm ourselves against every assault of our enemies, by calling to mind that our trials have been foretold by our divine Founder, that we might not be shaken when the hour cometh, but might remember that He had foretold us of them, and be comforted.

First. When our Lord and Master chose His Apostles among the illiterate and abject of mankind, and appointed them the heralds of His word, it was to demonstrate to the world, that the success which attended their preaching, was not attributable to their ability or influence, but to His divine power alone, who "chooses the weak things of this world, to confound the strong, that no flesh may glory in his sight" (I Cor. i, 27). To them He issued His command that they should "go forth and teach all nations" (Matt. xxviii, 19), and soon did His powerful word penetrate into the remotest corners of the globe: the gospel of Jesus was preached, and the banner of the crucified was displayed in triumph, where the boasted literature of Greece had never obtained access, and the eagles of Rome had never been exhibited. The celebrated Tertullian, in his Apology addressed to the Emperor and Senate, says to them: "We are yet in our infancy, and we have, notwithstanding, obtained a footing everywhere. We fill your cities, your armies, your fortresses, and your islands; only your temples do we leave to you." Long before this, the two great Apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, testify that places the most remote from each other, and from Jerusalem, where the Apostles received the promise of the Father, the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon them, enabling them to be witnesses unto

their Master, even to the uttermost part of the earth, that countries, deemed inaccessible, had received the faith, which till that time had scarcely felt the influence of reason. St. Peter addresses one of his Epistles to the faithful of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia Minor, and Bithynia; and St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Romans, written about four and twenty years after the death of Jesus Christ, tells them that their "faith is spoken of through the whole world" (i, 8), and that he himself had carried the light of the gospel as far as Illyricum (xv, 19), and was then preparing to pass into Spain (v, 24).

Together with the Christian religion, the nations received a Christian spirit: barbarians became civilized and meek; their ferocious manners, in consequence of which they pursued an injury with implicable resentment, were softened to forbearance and patient suffering; their altars no longer reeked with human gore; their habitations were no longer disgraced with shameful lust and brutal intemperance, but meekness, humility, purity, temperance, and every virtue adorned their lives; and when called upon by God to give testimony of Him and His law, they surrendered property, liberty and life itself rather than renounce their faith, and the hope of future glory. You, too, my beloved brethren, are required to bear testimony of your God and your religion, if not by professing your faith at the risk of your lives, at least by your virtuous and edifying deportment: and this pledge of your sincerity is more imperiously demanded of you, as it may be given with less danger of terrestrial disadvantage and worldly detriment. Fear not to profess that which ought to be your greatest honor and joy, that you are members of the holy Catholic Church, that you are heirs of Jesus Christ, the lineal descendants of the Apostles, and profess the same faith which they taught, and obey the same authority which Christ established in them. But let your conduct be such as to do credit to your profession; let your lives breathe a spirit of piety and unaffected devotion; let your conduct and behavior out of this sacred temple correspond with what is here taught, and what you pledge yourselves to practise when within these walls; let your reserve and modesty prove that the fear and love of God are the predominant affections of your hearts, the ruling principles of your lives; let your example in every place, and on every occasion diffuse an odor of edification, "that he who is on the contrary part may be afraid, having no evil to say of us" (Tit. ii, 8); that those

who dissent from your religion, may in vain seek for arguments against the sanctity of its tenets in the immorality of your lives, and be ever compelled to misrepresent your conduct as well as your creed, in order to discredit your religious belief. Alas! my friends, if they see you infected with the prevailing vices of the world, if they see you participating in amusements, which, of their own nature tend to stifle every sentiment of piety; indulging in pleasures, either vicious in themselves, or directly leading to vice; if they observe in you the same readiness to join in loose discourse, or wanton familiarities, in dissecting the character of your neighbor, or endeavoring to make him disliked; if they see you panting after the vanities and follies of the earth, or grasping with sordid avidity the little which your heavenly Father has given you; will they be induced, I will not say to embrace your faith, but even to think favorably of it? Or is this to "let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven?" (Matt. v, 16). If such be your conduct, will not the world think and speak to the prejudice of your religion! They will indeed calumniate it, "but wo to that man by whom the scandal cometh" (Matt. xviii, 7). They will unjustly charge your religion with your faults; but tell me, my friends, since the crimes which you commit are so strongly reprobated by your religion, do you not in a certain degree renounce your religion by committing them? if you are accessory to the sins of others you know that you become partakers in their guilt. And here let me admonish my female friends, lest by indulging in the prevailing modes of dress they excite the unchaste thought, the loose desire in the other sex, occasion sin in others, and thus sin themselves. O if you are guilty of thus seducing your fellow creatures, your brethren in Jesus Christ, if you go about in appearance like lambs, while you are preparing victims for him who "goeth about like a lion seeking whom he may devour" (I Pet. v, 8), you side with the enemy of God and man, and devote yourselves to his service. But your intentions, you say are innocent, you mean no harm, you think no evil: but believe me, dear children, when I assure you, that if obsequious to the edicts of sinful fashion, your attire adopts the indelicacy of the times, though I admit your conduct may at first be influenced only by the more venial motive of vanity, yet a greater guilt is approaching, while you open your breasts to the fire of impure love by enkindling it in those of others. As soon might

you carry in your bosoms the burning coal without receiving injury, as bear about you the incentives to lust in others, without receiving harm yourselves. You are called to bear testimony of God, and you wear the livery of Satan: you are not the disciples of Jesus, He disclaims you, for you have renounced Him. But, O let all your actions, your whole deportment and carriage be stamped with the impression of your divine Master; let your conversation be at all times free from whatever can give offense: let not a single word of profaneness come from your tongues; let not the slightest expression or insinuation of immodest tendency be heard from your lips: you may meet with difficulties occasionally, but be choice in the selection of your friends and associates, and difficulties will not be very frequent in their occurrence; and at a distance from the enemies of virtue, you will not be exposed to their malice or ridicule. But whatever trials you may be exposed to in the cause of virtue and religion, you may derive fortitude and consolation from the reflection that your Chief has foretold, that you must suffer with Him if you expect to reign with Him; and this He has foretold to you, that in the hour of trial you might not be intimidated or depressed. "These things have I told you, that when the hour shall come, you may remember that I told you of them" (John xvi, 4).

Secondly, let us ever bear in mind, my beloved brethren, that the Founder of our religion was exposed to the malice of His enemies, that He was persecuted and put to death; the Church which He established has ever been the butt of calumny, persecution and envy, and His followers have always been the objects of hostility and opposition from a profane and irreligious world: "they will put you out of their synagogue; yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth a service to God" (*Ibid.* 2). The world is a stranger to God, to the mission of Jesus Christ, to His gospel and the spirit of His gospel; an enemy to the mission of His Apostles and their successors; and therefore the world is an enemy to the religion of Jesus. "These things will they do, because they have not known my Father or me" (*Ibid.* 3). But are the wicked excusable in this their ignorance of Jesus Christ and His eternal Father? No, my brethren, to their eyes are exposed the unequivocal marks which demonstrate the divine origin of the Church of Christ, and the divinity of its Founder; but they shut their hearts against inducements which ought to prevail upon every thinking person; they close their eyes against a light which pours in upon them with

purest effulgence, and they fence in their minds and understandings against arguments which must operate upon the candid and unprejudiced mind. "The light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the light, for their works were evil" (John iii, 19). "If I had not come and spoken to them," said Our Lord to the Jews, "they would not have sin. . . . If I had not done among them the works that no other hath done, they would not have sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin; they have seen and hated both me and my Father" (John xv, 22). Unhappy Jews! and O unhappy sinners! In vain do you set yourselves against the Lord and against His anointed; in vain do you direct your efforts against the *rock* which shall stand firm till the end of time, amidst the assaults of all its enemies: "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi, 18). The Holy Ghost descended on the Apostles in Jerusalem for the Feast of Pentecost, and diffused His gifts on all who received the baptism of Jesus. The same Creator Spirit, which then gave testimony to the words, and fulfilled the promise of Christ Jesus by coming down on the Apostles, and taking charge of Christ's establishment, still continues to fulfil the promises of Christ by His perpetual presence with the spouse of Christ, teaching, animating, and directing her; preserving her from her foes, and the spirit of error: "When he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will teach you all truth" (John xvi, 13); and "behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. *ult.*). Notwithstanding the calumnies of sinners, the Church still retains her pristine glory and majesty, which the Holy Ghost conferred upon her in the beginning: notwithstanding the undutiful and afflicting conduct of many of her professed children, still is the Church of Christ pure in her doctrine, and unerring in her belief. Still secure in the promises of her divine Founder and the protection of His Holy Spirit, she teaches all truth, and proscribes error; expels from her bosom proud and haughty innovators, and preserves for her spouse docile and obedient children. For ever will the Catholic Church of Christ possess obedient children, who will be an honor to her; and confusion to them, who, in resisting her, resist the spirit of God. Unhappy slaves of a deluded world, miserable captives, why will you deceive yourselves? why for ever direct your unjust invectives against an authority which your Redeemer established? an authority founded in mercy, and exercised with the tenderest views to your welfare? Against its ministers you raise your un-

founded complaints, and most of all against those who are the firmest defenders of virtue and religion. If you find one who is ready to sacrifice to vanity and human respect; one who will with temporizing meanness, with supple compliance or tame indifference, surrender the cause of God and the prerogatives of His holy religion; you will perhaps flatter and caress such a one; but they, who actuated by the spirit and zeal of the Apostles, seek in all things, and above all things the glory of God and the salvation of souls; who boldly stand forward in the cause of God and His Church, who are unwilling to fawn or flatter, to acquire your favor or the world's applause; who are steadily devoted to the welfare of those entrusted to them, studious to promote their best interests, and ever solicitous to procure their happiness through life and in the moments of death—in time and throughout eternity; these are generally criticised, censured, calumniated, and detested by the world: sometimes, alas! by those whose interests they are the most anxious to forward. Why, again let me ask, do the children of the world cry out against those whose courage they can not imitate? against those who have abandoned the pleasures of this life and renounced all to follow Christ? The greatest favorites of heaven are generally the most cruelly persecuted; they often drink deepest of the cup of human sorrow. Why does the unhappy sinner deal out his ridicule and scoffs against those pious souls, whom Jesus has withdrawn from the contagion of a wicked world, which they have prudently forsaken? why are they the constant objects of irreligious sarcasm and raillery, who have rather chosen "to be afflicted with the people of God, than to have the pleasure of sin for a time?" (Heb. xi, 25), "of whom the world was not worthy?" (*Ibid.* 38). For us they pour forth their earnest entreaties; and is it not to their good prayers that we are indebted for our preservation, amidst the general indevotion, amidst the wickedness, which, like an overspreading deluge, covers the face of the earth? In solitude and prayer, in patient mortification, they raise their hearts to heaven, and, like their suffering Lord, receive all the contradictions and calumnies of irreligious scoffers, with silent resignation.

Think of these things, my brethren, and be comforted in every trying situation in which Providence may place you: you hear them now and you feel present resolution: when the moment arrives in which the consideration of these things may be serviceable to you, recall them to your recollection. The Apostles, martyrs, confes-

sors, and all the saints of God, thought upon what their Master suffered, on what He had foretold was prepared for them, and encouraged by the thought, they braved the fury of persecutors, and the horrors of death. Sufferings thus foretold, fall with less severity upon us, because they are foreseen and expected; they are a proof of your faith, a pledge of promised reward.

If you are not exposed to the rage of persecution, openly directed against you, yet you live in a world which is a stranger to the practice of virtue, no less than to the truth of your religion. You are, moreover, all of you exposed to some trials, for suffering is the lot of man on earth. Remember then that your Saviour has said, "Blessed are they that mourn, and blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v, 5). "He that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal" (John xii, 25).

Remember that he who would serve his Lord faithfully, must take up his cross and follow His Master, and that an eternity of delights will be the reward of momentary patience. Should the malice of your enemies, or the prejudices of your countrymen, call in question your civil allegiance, and represent you as disaffected toward the government under which you live; let your good conduct, the best refutation of calumny, be your justification. Bear with patience this trying provocation, a thousand times offered, and in all appearance, as often to be renewed.

Christians, be true to your earthly superiors, whom God has placed over you; "being subject to them for the sake of God" (I Pet. ii, 13); but be true to God, your supreme and sovereign Lord; be true to that faith which He has mercifully revealed to you; practising what God and religion enjoin, not scandalizing those who dissent from you, by sinful behavior; and though the world continue to traduce you and persecute you, possess your souls in patience, bear the model of your Saviour before your eyes; "serve your Lord in gladness;" and remember that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii, 18).

FOR THE FESTIVAL OF PENTECOST

ON THE DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST

"They were all filled with the Holy Ghost."—Acts ii, 4.

SYNOPSIS.—Christian and Jewish Pentecost compared. The effects of the Paraclete in the souls of the Apostles. So with us.

I. How to receive Him. Purge the soul from every defilement of sin by a good Confession and the sincerest contrition. Banish all love for sinful ways.

II. How to keep Him. Cultivate the heavenly Visitor with love. Do not offer Him a divided heart. Preserve yourselves from contact with worldly amusements. Live a simple, serene life.

III. The vanity of earthly joys. Our own experience in the past. The joys brought by the Comforter are real and lasting.

Our divine Redeemer, before His ascension, and even before His passion, informed His disciples that the Paraclete, the spirit of truth should descend upon them, and that, filled with His heavenly graces, they should bear testimony of Him, suffer persecution for His sake, and lay down their lives in defense of His cause and doctrine. This was read to you in the gospel of last Sunday, and in the epistle which the Church appoints for this sacred day, is described the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the disciples assembled together. In the old law the Jewish people observed the Feast of Pentecost, in commemoration of their having, on that day, received the commands of God on Mount Sinai, in thunder and lightning; and with religious gratitude and respect ought every Christian to observe this Feast of Pentecost, because on the same day was published on Mount Sion, by the descent of the Holy Ghost, in the form of tongues of fire, the new law of grace and love. Filled with the fire of divine charity and a glowing zeal for the honor of God, they forthwith proceed to execute the injunctions of their divine Master: they go forth and teach all nations, baptizing them, etc., and though they had been assured that the hatred and malice of men would be directed against them, and that they who should put them to death, would imagine, that in so doing, they would perform a service agreeable to God (Mark xvi); yet they were not intimidated, but boldly preached the doctrine of Jesus, and boldly died in its defense. My brethren, while we are astonished at the wonderful change

wrought in the Apostles by the descent of the Holy Ghost, let us not suppose that His gifts and graces were confined to them, or to the faithful of their time. If He descend not upon us now in tongues of fire, yet He is for ever with His Church, guiding it into all truth; for as His Church is to continue to the end of time, so was it necessary to secure it from error to the end of the world; and hence Our Lord in the prayer which He made for His disciples (John xviii, 21), says, "not for them only do I pray, but for those also who through their word, shall believe in me;" and in promising to them a Comforter he tells them (John xiv, 16), "I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever, the spirit of truth." If we sincerely seek Him, and prepare an abode for Him, He will enrich us with His invisible graces and communications; and if we expel Him not from us by our unworthy conduct, He will abide with us forever. That you may make a suitable preparation for the reception of the Holy Ghost, I shall inform you of the dispositions necessary for receiving Him; and if you value His sacred presence, I shall instruct you in the means necessary for preserving Him in your souls.

That you may understand what dispositions are requisite in order to receive this heavenly visitor, it is necessary that you should well consider who He is. There is a spirit which pervades the society of mankind, and influences their conduct; a spirit which actuates them in every circumstance of life, and which is held in such high estimation and respect, that they who are not completely animated by it, and practised in its maxims, are said to be ignorant of life, and sometimes pronounced to be unfit to live. But this, alas! is not the spirit of God, but the spirit of the world; nor can they dwell together in the same breast. "Whosoever will be a friend of this world, becometh an enemy of God," says St. James (iv, 4); and St. John declares to us, that "if any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him" (I Ep. ii, 15). No; if you wish to receive the spirit of God, the spirit of Jesus Christ, you must renounce the world, and the things of the world; you must prepare a pure dwelling for the spirit of purity. Whatever can offend Him must be removed, the inward house must be purified: all defilement of sin, all secret attachment to past gratification, all fond *inclination* to future indulgence must be entirely forsaken: sin is infinitely odious in His eyes. While the eyes of man are captivated with the appearance of earthly beauty, of dust and ashes, hastening to corruption,

the future food and feast for worms, the spirit of God looks with complacency, only on the *soul,* the immortal spirit, that is decorated with the divine graces. The soul which is defiled with mortal sin, is an object of disgust and hatred to the God, who created it, it becomes the dwelling of unclean spirits, the slave of as many odious spirits as it is tyrannized over by unruly passions. "Wisdom will not enter into a malicious soul, nor dwell in a body subject to sins" (Wisd. i, 4). Know then, beloved brethren, and be not deceived by the wiles of Satan; know that if you sincerely wish to receive the spirit of God, you must bid adieu to sin and apply to your God through the merits of your Redeemer, for pardon. Call upon the Lord with ardent desires and fervent prayer, entreat Him to expel far from you the spirit of iniquity, and have recourse to that merciful institution, to which He has annexed the application of the merits of your Saviour's sufferings, for the remission of sins: confess your offenses to His appointed delegates, to whom He has said, "Whose sins," etc. (John xx, 23). But confess them with heartfelt compunction for your past disloyalty and ingratitude, with shame and confusion, not that you have incurred the censure or reflections of the world, but because you have sinned against heaven and against God, your faithful, everlasting Lover, your tender Father, the source of purity and sanctity, and are no more worthy to be called His children. Confess and repent, let confession and repentance go together, and let a change of sentiment, life and action, give unequivocal proof of your conversion. Away with all pride, covetousness and lust; let them not obtain admission into your souls in artful disguise, or be entertained as harmless guests; while shutting your eyes to their deceptions, they are preying on your very vitals. Beseech the spirit of *truth* that He will banish from His kingdom, henceforth established in your hearts, all insincerity and duplicity, that ingenious hypocrisy by which you seek the goodwill of men. Call down with earnest supplication the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of discipline, of purity, of humility and love: beg Him to drive far away all animosity and ill-will, all pride and ostentation, all desire of the world's opinion; all wantonness and impurity, every fond familiarity and artful expedient of concupiscence, by which you have contrived to indulge illicit satisfaction under the cloak of reserve and affected modesty: let your hearts be wholly consigned to God, let all your affections be placed on Him, your sovereign truth and true happiness forever. Oh! beseech Him to

come, that creating Spirit, to renew a right spirit within you, to reform your hearts by a new creation, and make them all His own.

Secondly. This it is that you are to desire; not that He will visit you, only for a time, by His holy graces, to be again excluded from your souls, to make way for some vain folly or vice; but that He will take up His abode within you, and never more depart from you. To secure to yourselves this greatest blessing, continue to keep up a sense of the happiness you enjoy in possessing the Holy Ghost. If you neglect your heavenly visitor, if you show Him a behavior of negligence and inattention; if you enter not frequently into your inward house, and there bow down in adoration and gratitude; if it be not your delight to converse with Him, to expose to Him your necessities, and to ask relief, to pour out your whole self, in amorous effusions, before the beloved of your soul; or if you seek to divide your affections between a love of Him, and the false delights of a cheated and a cheating world; He will forsake the abode that is not wholly His own. He will not dwell in a body subject to sins, nor divide His empire with the spirit of the world, which is His declared enemy. Jesus Christ has named him "the Spirit of Truth, which the world can not receive" (John xiv, 17). Nor will He admit an idol to be erected in that temple which is dedicated to Himself: a divided heart He will despise. Can the true Christian, the sincere penitent, who truly laments that he has been guilty of the greatest evil, who with broken heart groans over his past iniquities, can he partake in the senseless gaiety of the world? can he forget his past misery, and resort to those circles of dissipation, in which, perhaps, his soul first inhaled the deadly contagion, to which he owed his subsequent calamities; which must remind him of former guilt, and probably awaken within him a sense of satisfaction in the recollection of past gratifications? While the revelries and amusements of the world are so generally fatal to virtue and hostile to the use and interest of religion, can the true disciple of Jesus Christ join the crowd of unhappy worldlings, and, as it were, mix in profane dance on the ruins of the holy city? Supposing that he were himself secure amidst the danger, yet could he lightly frolic amidst the spiritual deaths of thousands, falling around him by the death of sin? But you tell me you are in the world, and therefore, you must associate with the world; that you are not immured within the precincts of a monastery: that yours is necessarily a life of distraction. This I know, my brethren,

you can not wholly withdraw from the world: but you can, and if you wish to save your souls, you must withdraw from its crimes and dangerous pleasures. While your bodies are in the world, your souls must be far from it. To seek its vanities, to covet its dissipating amusements; to rush from the place of safety, and plunge into the foaming ocean, where you are sure to be absorbed by the waves, is an act of desperate suicide, is to incur inevitable destruction. I know we must live in the world, and that our necessary intercourse with it is not without danger: but we must lament the necessity which exposes us to ruin, and shun danger as much as is possible. We are placed in the world; but in our communications with it, we must endeavor to inspire respect and love for religion, and its author; our example must never sanction its pomps and crimes, which we have renounced; our prudence and circumspection must be such as to convince the world that we are unwilling to displease God, and our conduct must induce to virtue. A moderate joy and sweet serenity, the result of innocence, and peace of conscience, must make the world see and acknowledge that "Virtue alone is happiness below," and disabuse it of that gross error, that it is impossible to enjoy content at a distance from the pleasures of earth, with the consolation only of conscious integrity.

My brethren, be assured that the joys of the world only appear desirable when seen at a distance; if you take a nearer view, if you venture upon experiment, you will find to your cost, that sorrow, and pain, and care, are mixed with all its seeming satisfactions. Oh! look back to those which yourselves have experienced; are they such as can afford you comfort, standing in the presence of God? a momentary oblivion was produced, which was afterward followed by painful recollection and bitter remorse. Ah! has not that, which seemed to promise unfailing pleasure and prosperity, proved the bane of all your comforts, the source of sad remembrance, of reflections, which now distress your soul, and can not at all times be suppressed? Thoughtless and unexperienced, you promised yourselves real enjoyment; but the ideal vision is now over, the pleasing images have disappeared, the sunshine has given way to cheerless gloom, and happy would you deem yourselves, could you recover innocence and peace of mind, by annulling those pleasures to which you were borne by such resistless attraction! My beloved friends, all sin is misery; if you received the Holy Ghost, at this solemn festival, preserve His favor, nor defile His temples, which

are your souls. "If any man violate the temple of God, him will God destroy" (I Cor. iii, 17). But endeavor moreover to decorate them with every pleasing ornament, with every virtue and every grace, that He may fix His abode within your souls, and reside there forever.

TRINITY SUNDAY

ON DIVINE REVELATION

"Behold I am with you all days, even to the end of the world."—Matt. xxviii, 5, ult.

SYNOPSIS.—The meaning of the feast; how and why we should reverence it.

I. The commission given to the Apostles and to their successors. The promise of Christ; its effect from the beginning to the present day. The Church protected in faith and morals forever.

II. The Church is made the dispenser of the Sacraments; necessity of Baptism. We must believe and obey, or be lost.

III. The authority of the Church to enact laws. Our duty in relation to the Commandments of the Church. The Church has always triumphed over her persecutors, and this by the power and protection promised and given her by her Divine Founder.

Although every Sunday throughout the year is dedicated to the honor of the adorable Trinity, yet this Sunday is set apart, in an especial manner, to celebrate that Divine mystery, which is the basis of the Christian religion, and though incomprehensible to human reason, must nevertheless be firmly believed, and assented to by whosoever professes himself to be a Christian. What the Church of Christ teaches, with regard to this mystery, is briefly this. There is *one* supreme, eternal God, the Creator of heaven and earth, and in this *one* God, there are three divine Persons, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, really distinct one from the other. The Father is from no one, the Son is from the Father from all eternity, of the same nature and substance, and equal to Him in power and majesty. The Holy Ghost is from the Father and the Son, not made, nor created, but proceeding from the Father and the Son, from all eternity, of the same nature and substance and equal to them in power and majesty. So that the Father, Son and Holy Ghost are one supreme eternal Being, one God, in three distinct persons, equally to be praised, adored and glorified forever! In the short but interesting Gospel of this Sunday, we behold Jesus Christ sending forth his Apostles to teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of this blessed Trinity. Illiterate and unexperienced, unacquainted with the policy, the arts, the address of the world, they are to enlighten it by their preaching, and to sanctify it by their

influence and example. In all ages the faith of Christ has met with opposition, and even among those who are compelled to acknowledge its divine origin, some there are who, instead of thanking heaven for the inestimable blessing, are apt to consider the gift of faith as an unfortunate restraint, which confines their projects, and narrows their enjoyments; embittering the sweets of sensual gratification, by the representation of a future judgment, and the alarming prospect of future retribution. Instead of considering it as a signal favor of the Almighty, they view it as a painful light, which they endeavor, by every fallacious argument, to extinguish in themselves and others. But let us, my brethren, be more wise; let us ever esteem divine revelation as God's best gift to man; let us consider it as an auspicious star of benignest influence; let us open our eyes to receive its salutary light, and direct our steps by its unerring guidance. Believing, as you do, in the wisdom and power of the divine Founder of the Christian religion, that He is God as well as man, equal to the Father and the Holy Ghost, I shall offer you a few reflections founded on this belief, and sanctioned by the Gospel I have read to you, that will console you under every terrestrial calamity, by the conviction of His powerful protection, to His kingdom on earth, the Church, which He established, and which will be perpetuated through every era of time, to the consummation of the world.

First. When the eleven had celebrated the Passover at Jerusalem, they returned to Galilee, and there resumed their wonted occupations. On a certain day they repaired to "the mountain, where Jesus had appointed them" (Matt. xxviii, 16). There He appeared to them, and "coming, spoke to them, saying: All power is given to me in heaven, and in earth: go ye, therefore, and teach all nations baptizing them in the name," etc., "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and behold I am with you," etc. (*Ibid.* 18). Weigh well these words, my brethren, for they are full of comfort to the believer. Jesus proclaims to them this omnipotence, "All power," etc. It was by His resurrection that He entered into the possession of this "Almighty power," which His Father gave Him; this He enjoys in heaven, where He sits enthroned at the right hand of God; by this He sends down the Holy Ghost, the comforter; invites and conducts to heaven His faithful servants, who believe all that He teaches, relying on His unerring word, and carefully "observe all things whatsoever

he commands" them by His word, and by the word of His Apostles, whom He has commissioned to "teach these things to all nations," and with whom He abides "all days, even," etc. This almighty power He exercised upon earth, in establishing His Church, in defiance of all resistance from earth and hell; this He has continued to exercise, in diffusing and perpetuating His Church through a lapse of many ages, and amidst the wreck of empires, the revolution, decay and fall of earthly establishments; unchanged and unimpaired amidst the constant vicissitudes of all sublunary things. Yes, my brethren, He has preserved His Church, and the faith of His Church, *unchanged* and *unimpaired;* for though the fervor of her members may have decreased; though primitive piety has certainly abated; though kings and princes, and whole nations, have forsaken her, yet her faith, still unvarying, is the same under a Nero, exposing the bodies of her children as torches to enlighten the darkness of night, and under a Constantine honoring and exalting the professors of her doctrines. Her faith is the same now, even in these our days of immorality, the same throughout the whole Catholic Church, as it was preached at Jerusalem, at Antioch, at Ephesus. at Corinth, at Rome itself by its first heralds, the Apostles of Jesus Christ: for it is still preached by them in their successors, in whom is fulfilled the promise of its divine Founder, that He would "abide with them all days, even to the consummation of the world." By this almighty power Jesus subdues kingdoms and governments to the yoke of His faith, converts sinners to a life of holiness, and sanctifies His elect to salvation; and, surrounded with the same omnipotence, He will come at the last day, to judge all nations, and to render to all men according to their works. O, adorable power, which our Lord, who died for our redemption, wishes to exercise only for our sanctification! "All power is given to me," etc. "Go ye, therefore," etc. All the nations of the earth are, therefore, called to the faith of the Gospel, and the rays of this celestial light would be diffused to every tribe and people, did they not shut their eyes against it, or obstruct its influence. The mission of the Apostles still subsists in their successors; what the twelve, immediately appointed by Jesus Christ, could not execute during their mortal lives, they appointed others to execute after them; to perpetuate the sacred deposit of faith to all times, and extend the long, uninterrupted chain of apostolical succession from their time to the very end of time, even to the consummation of the world.

Secondly. The same almighty power of Jesus Christ, which appointed the Apostles and their legitimate successors to plant His faith in all nations, also constituted them the ministers of His Sacraments. "Go ye, therefore," etc, "baptizing them," etc. Here is expressed the form to be employed in the administration of Baptism, an epitome of the principal mysteries of the Christian religion. The Sacrament of Baptism is alone mentioned, because by it we are made Christians, because it is the first in point of reception, and the first in importance: being the only one absolutely necessary, either in reality or desire, to eternal salvation. When, by means of this Sacrament we are admitted within the pale of the Church, our tender mother, the spouse of Jesus Christ, opens to us all her treasures, and instructs us concerning the other Sacraments. The necessity of baptism, in order to enter into the kingdom of God is strongly insisted upon by Our Lord; but the necessity of a faith, obedient to divine revelation, and demonstrating its vital existence, by good works, is also powerfully urged and required. For why are the Apostles commanded to teach all nations, unless all nations be commanded to receive their words, and believe what they teach? And why has Jesus promised to be with them even to the end of the world, unless to secure the faith and doctrine of their successors forever? Unhappy they, who, having received the Sacrament of Baptism, refuse their assent to the doctrines of Christ's Church! but what is the guilt of those, who, being baptized, and admitting from full conviction the authority of the Catholic Church of Christ, and the infallible truth of her doctrines because taught by Christ himself, still blindly and inconsistently contradict, by their lives, the faith which they receive: who submit their *understanding* to the *faith* of Christ, but refuse to submit their *will* to His *law*, living and dying in mortal sin! "He that believeth not, shall be condemned," says Our Lord (Mark xvi, 16), but these shall receive a twofold sentence of malediction, having despised the blessings of both baptism and faith and being thus *worse than the unbeliever.*

Thirdly. But the almighty power of Our Redeemer is not confined to the doctrine and Sacraments of His Church; but extends to acts of legislation, and the regulation of conduct; since He authorizes His appointed delegates to teach all nations to "observe all things whatsoever he commands them." Yes, my brethren, the authority of the Church in enacting laws, and enforcing the duties of morality, is here evidently established. It is only from the

Apostles that we can learn what Christ has commanded, since they are appointed the instructors and teachers of all nations; them we are commanded to hear, with certain security that in hearing them we are receiving the word of Christ himself; who said to them, "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you," etc., (Luke x, 16). The precepts of the Church are, therefore, obligatory upon Christians; her solemnities are to be observed, her fasts are not to be despised or neglected: the rites and ceremonies which she employs in the administration of the Sacraments, and in the celebration of her liturgy, are not to be ridiculed, vilified or set aside; her voice is to be obeyed, as the voice of Christ himself, in the regulation of discipline, and the acts of spiritual legislation: lest despising her, we despise Him, who first established her, still preserves her, and will preserve her forever: for He has declared that He will "be with his apostles all days, even to the end of the world," and that He has "built his Church upon a rock, and that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. xvi, 18). Vain, indeed, would have been the instructions given by Our Lord to His Apostles, when He appointed them to their important embassy, if He had then abandoned them. Little would have prevailed the feeble efforts of uninformed, unskilful men, without the resources of wealth, influence, or connections; without honors or emolument wherewith to recompense their followers, had not the same almighty power, under which they commenced the arduous enterprise, upheld and supported them throughout. But He who assured them that "all power was given to him in heaven and on earth," promises them His aid and assistance to the end of time. "Behold I am with you," etc. Yes, He is with His Apostles, in the persons of their successors in the ministry, in the pastors of His Church, now and forever. By His presence He is their support under persecution, their teacher, when assailed by schism, heresy, and the multifarious arts of pernicious error; He is their food and nourishment in that stupendous mystery of love, the blessed Eucharist. He gives us His own Body and Blood for the food of our souls, and He has declared that, "except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye shall not have life in you" (John vi, 54). As long as the world shall subsist, He will be with His Church; not a day nor an hour will this His work be abandoned or forgotten: and as it will be always true to say: I believe in the "Holy Catholic Church," so will it be at no time true to say, that the Church has failed or dis-

appeared, or taught doctrines contrary to those which its divine Founder delivered. The experience of eighteen centuries attests its sacred origin, and immortal principle. Neither the rack of persecution, the machinations of a false philosophy, the clash of interests, nor the fury of outrageous passions, have shaken the foundations of His glorious edifice; for it "is built on a rock, and the gates," etc. The terrestrial power of its pontiffs may decrease or perish, but their spiritual power will remain inviolate. Christ never promised the power and dignities of *this* world, to the bishops and rulers of His Church, nor do they claim such a promise. During the first three centuries, that is, during the golden ages of Christianity, its prelates enjoyed no terrestrial dominion; they suffered and they bled for Christ; this was their wealth, their joy, their glory; other riches they had none; but each of them could say with St. Paul, "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death: for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. i, 20). Let not then the enemies of our faith exult, when they behold the priests and bishops of the Church dispersed and driven into exile. Their terrestrial possessions may be wrested from them, their mortal lives may be destroyed; but their faith, spiritual and immortal, like their souls, defies the sword of persecution, and all the instruments of death; the religion of Jesus shall stand and flourish, superior to all the united assaults of earth and hell. They know, however, and we know, that the Church is safe from the malice of its enemies; it rests not upon the strength or policy of human ability, but on the power and promises of its omnipotent Founder.

Yes, blessed Jesus, "all power is given to thee," etc., and thy Church shall flourish forever. Individuals may fall off, and be forsaken by thee; the greatest geniuses have lapsed into error, to show that human wit is neither the foundation nor the security of divine faith; but thy Church, thy congregation, thy inheritance, shall be preserved by thee to the end of time. Preserve, O Lord, we beseech thee, thy undeserving people, who now supplicate thy protection: let not the trials, to which thy Providence pleases to expose thy servants, shake our faith, or make us doubt of thy protection. Let us ever bear in mind that whatever adversity may assail thy Church, thou art still with it and will not forget thy promises: that while thou art our protector and defense, the enemy shall not prevail against us, nor shall the son of iniquity have power to hurt us: though the winds may howl and the billows foam, and the bark of

Peter be covered with waves, yet thou art present, and at thy command the winds shall cease to roar, the waves to swell: that the vessel which beareth thee is secure from danger, though thou appear to sleep, and at thy will there shall be a great calm. Grant that we may ever adhere to thy truth, firmly confiding in thy power and promises that thou wilt preserve thy holy Church in every revolution of state and earthly vicissitude, "throughout all generations, till the moon be taken away" (Ps. lxxi, 5, 7). Grant likewise that our lives, influenced by thy holy faith, may be pure and holy, diffusing around a sweet odor, a bright light, "that others seeing our good works, may glorify thee our heavenly Father" (Matt. v, 16).

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON THE FUTILITY OF THE EXCUSES ALLEGED FOR ABSENCE FROM COMMUNION

"A certain man made a great supper, and invited many."—Luke xiv, 16.

SYNOPSIS.—The various interpretations of the parable. The interpretation of the Church to-day. Our belief in the Real Presence. The great love for us evinced by Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar. Why His invitation is refused. The various excuses. The real reasons; 1st. Our pride; its consequences. 2d. Our worldliness; its effects. 3d. Our entanglements, in or out of Matrimony. The dignity of Matrimony; its purpose. It is an aid, not an obstacle to the service of God. 4th. Our unworthiness; this means our selfishness and pride; our refusal to give up sin.

The parable, which our blessed Saviour addressed to the Pharisees admits of different explications. By some it is understood as referring to the great mystery of the Word incarnate, who came into this world for the salvation of man. By others it is interpreted as expressive of that everlasting bliss and ineffable glory, which Jesus Christ has merited for mankind, by the effusion of His precious Blood. By the Church, who has chosen it for this Sunday, it is here applied to the Sacrament of the Altar; to that banquet, which Our Lord prepares for His servants, giving them His Body and Blood for nourishment of their souls; "for his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood is drink indeed" (John vi, 56). Yes, my brethren, it is indeed a great supper to which we are invited, whether we consider the dignity of Him, who makes us His guests, or the excellence of the food which is offered to us in this banquet. A God made man for our sake, calls us to His sacred table, and gives Himself for our food and nourishment. Great God! what must be the excess of thy love for us thy creatures—what thy condescension, thus to humble thyself for the love of man?

But what must be the guilt of those, who either spurn this loving kindness of their God, by rejecting His invitation, or who come to His feast in such a manner as to display the utmost contempt for the Lord of Glory! I shall endeavor to rouse the former from their fatal lethargy, by proving to them the futility of every

pretext which they employ to justify their neglect, and to awaken in the latter a salutary dread and remorse, by showing, at least in some degree, the enormity of their conduct, who presume to approach to His holy Sacrament without suitable dispositions; who "eat and drink unworthily, not discerning the body of the Lord."

Jesus, who on account of His great love for man, is often named in the Holy Scriptures the Son of Man, has left in the Church, which He established on earth, a great Sacrament, a pledge of His love for us; a memorial of His sacred passion, and a source of grace and sanctification. This is the Sacrament of the blessed Eucharist, in which He gives us Himself for our food, who gave His life for our ransom. To this celestial banquet—to this true manna He invites His miserable creatures; He sends His servants to inform them that their presence is expected; to say to them that "they should come, for now all things are ready." But, by reason of obstinacy and blindness, many reject the invitation, and invent excuses to justify, or palliate their neglect. "I have bought a farm, and must of necessity go out and see it; I pray thee hold me excused." This excuse, according to St. Augustine and St. Gregory, is the apology of the proud, who disdain to accept the invitation from a conceit of their fancied superiority or independence. Pride keeps too many from approaching to this holy Sacrament. Some refuse to acknowledge the presence of their God in the humble exterior in which He comes to visit His creatures, not considering that His condescension in so doing does not prove His lowliness, but ours; does not degrade Him, but ought to humble us. For in this, our weak and lowly condition, how could we receive the Lord of Glory, arrayed in all the splendors of infinite majesty? How could we contemplate the bright radiance of His countenance, and not be confounded by the glorious effulgence. He comes to us concealing the greatness of that power and majesty, which would overpower the weakness of human nature; He gives Himself to us under humble veils, compassionating thus our feeble powers, yet enriching our souls with His inestimable gifts and graces. Let pride be humbled and confounded at the goodness and condescension of infinite power, in pity of our littleness and for our example.

The second excuse mentioned in the gospel is a sinful avarice, and how often does this sordid vice keep back unhappy men from approaching to this feast of charity? "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to try them. I pray thee, etc." Alas! mere ter-

restrial advantage, worldly interests, are continually preferred to the duties and benefits of religion. This faith which you profess, this Catholic faith, is not unfrequently acknowledged to be the faith of Jesus Christ; but it is said, if we embrace this faith, such is the prejudice that exists against it in this country, that our prospects, as to this world, will be obscured, our terrestrial success injured, and, at all events, we must live. But this will not justify their absenting themselves from the feast of God's table. Do they not know that they were created to love God, and to serve Him, in spite of difficulty? Did they not, in their baptism, renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil, knowing that against their suggestions and assaults they would have to struggle through life? "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith" (Mat. viii, 26). The Lord will not forsake those who trust in Him. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you" (*Ibid.* vi, 33). But fearful of losing terrestrial goods, and improvidently regardless of future and eternal possessions, many neglect this blessed institution, and permit their souls to perish.

They can not frequent the Sacraments? Why not? The concerns of business—the hurry of situation—the cares of the world do not leave time for preparation. What is this, but to say that the concerns of the present life, present gain, and present emolument must have the preference over eternal salvation? The body, and its conveniences and enjoyments must first be studied and obtained, and then the soul may be considered. What is this but a sordid attachment to the earth, and the things of the earth? A miserable servitude, which, however, is embraced and cherished by many, who call themselves Christians; willing slaves to human respect, human interest, human motives, to which they sacrifice all their better prospects for eternity. There is a third description of persons represented by the man, who, in consequence of matrimonial engagements, without using excuse or apology, positively refused His attendance. "I have married a wife, and therefore can not come" (v. 20). The state of matrimony is a state of sanctity, without doubt; it leads to holiness, because its end is holy; it has God for its founder, and, in the new law, has been raised to the dignity of a Sacrament by the Son of God; but alas, this holy state is often profaned by those who enter it, and instead of being made by the united efforts, example and mutual encouragements of the parties

a help to sanctification, is very often made a source of perpetual discord, strife and misery here, and of eternal misery hereafter.

This state of life, though the state to which the generality of mankind are called, should be engaged in, not with that precipitate indeliberation which is so discernible for the most part; not with that motive of worldly advantage, profit, or convenience, which makes so many barter away their liberty, their happiness, their persons for gold, and makes the sacred engagement of matrimony a mere pecuniary transaction—a sordid traffic. Nor should it be embraced with that impetuosity of passion, which has no other object in view but the low pleasures of sensual gratification, by which it is made not a remedy against concupiscence, but the occasion, and the means of indulging sinful lust. No, it should be sought from virtuous motives, embraced from a desire of facilitating the practise of virtue, by the mutual support of the sexes; with a view of propagating the species; of bringing up children who may perpetuate God's honor and service on earth, and people heaven; and as a secondary motive, it may be embraced as a legitimate remedy against the assaults of concupiscence; and when engaged in all its comforts and enjoyments, all its occasional trials and crosses, should be made subservient to the great concern of salvation. By an opposite conduct, it is made a state of difficulty and danger, whence the Apostle St. Paul declares to us that "he that is with a wife, is solicitous for the things of the world" (I Cor. vii, 33). But he says, "I would have you to be without solicitude" (*Ibid.* v, 32); therefore he recommends to those who are enabled, by the grace of God, to lead a life of perpetual continency, to do so; "I say to the unmarried and to the widows, it is good for them if they so continue, even as I" (v. 8). If, however, they are not called to a state of perpetual continency, he then exhorts them to embrace the marriage state. "If they do not contain themselves, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn"; that is, than to be consumed by unlawful desires, or to gratify unlawful passion.

This, however, is not to be understood as Protestants explain it, of those who are consecrated to Almighty God, either by entering upon His ministry, or by religious vows; for if these employ the proper means God will enable them to preserve their first vows by which they became espoused to Him. The fathers of the Reformation, who began by a violation of religious vows, endeavored to justify their defection from these solemn engagements previously

made to God, by the authority of St. Paul in this passage, but they have corrupted the passage to serve their purpose. The Apostle does not here admit the impossibility of leading a life of continence, or he would contradict himself, having in the preceding verse recommended to the unmarried and to widows, to continue single; exhorting to the same effect in a following verse, where he declares that the married are led to a solicitude for the things of the world, whereas "the unmarried and the virgin," he expressly asserts, "thinketh on the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and in spirit" (v. 34 and 38); he says, "he that giveth his virgin," etc. But in every lawful state of life it is possible to serve God, and the state of lawful matrimony affords no just excuse for neglecting this holy institution, for remaining at a distance from this great supper, which may be made the means of supporting the troubles of life with due resignation, and not drawing off the affections from what is terrestrial, to the things that are of God and to God himself. None of these excuses will be admitted, nor will they be heard, who attempt to justify their negligence, by a pretended respect for these august mysteries, by alleging their great unworthiness.

It is true our respect for this great Sacrament can not be too great, but it should be a respect conformable to the intentions of Jesus Christ. It is not by your absenting yourselves, that He will consider Himself as honored, since He commands you to come, but by the dispositions which you bring with you; and when you have endeavored, according to your best ability, to acquire these dispositions, if you do not give Him all the honor which is His due, you give Him at least what is in your power; you obey His law. It is a false respect which keeps you away; a respect, if it can be so called, which is displeasing to God, which is injurious to yourselves, as you well know; for surely you do not flatter yourselves that you are practising humility by keeping at a distance from your loving and condescending Saviour; the pretext of unworthiness should not satisfy your consciences, and withdraw you from the holy table. I do not mean that notwithstanding the state of sin in which you live, you should eat the body of the Lord and drink His Blood. God forbid that I should seem to authorize such a profanation, and wo to that man who should thus commit so criminal an abuse of this most sacred institution, this most august of our mysteries; but my meaning is, that if under the color of

your unworthiness, you resolve to abstain from the holy Sacrament, because your lives are not sufficiently regular or exemplary, instead of resolving, as you ought to resolve, to reform your lives and renounce your evil habits; that if because you sin, you conceive yourselves dispensed from the obligations of receiving the blessed Eucharist, instead of concluding that sin is to be forsaken and repented of, that you may not deprive yourselves of the inestimable advantages to be derived from it; your pretext of unworthiness is fallacious and null. Say not, my life is such as to make me unfit to receive the God of holiness, therefore do I bid adieu to the holy Sacrament; but since my present conduct debars me from this life-giving food, this heavenly feast, I will reform my conduct. The pretext that persons are unworthy to receive the holy Communion, means no more than that they can not prevail upon themselves to abandon sin, and that they are not yet so lost to faith as well as to virtue, as to presume to harbor the God of all sanctity in their polluted breasts; and this pretext, which begins with the Sacrament of the Altar, is gradually extended to all the several acts of religion. The Word of God is not heard, because, say they, it is to no purpose to hear God's word, without a desire to profit by it; the homage of praise and thanksgiving is not offered to the Almighty, because the praises of the Lord ought not to proceed from the lips of a sinner, who is hardened in iniquity; the Sacrament of Penance, that source of grace and comfort to penitent sinners, is forsaken; for why should we approach to a Sacrament of which we are unworthy; the duty of prayer, and even the assistance at the holy Sacrifice, and attendance at the temple of the Most High, are resigned upon the plea of unworthiness; and thus every exterior succor is cut off, and a kind of voluntary self-excommunication is submitted to upon a false principle of respect and pride, decorating itself with the vesture of humility.

Let me conclude by earnestly exhorting you to know your own interest and happiness, to endeavor to obviate the obstacles which stand in your way and prevent your approach to Jesus Christ, not to adduce them as excuses for your neglect. Go, then, to your God with trembling step, conscious of your unworthiness, as sinful creatures; but let a well-founded confidence in His mercies bear you to the foot of His altar, and embolden you to receive Him. Were we to deny support to our bodies, we should justly deem ourselves guilty of suicide; Christ has declared that "except we eat," etc. Shall we

then acquit ourselves of equal, or even greater guilt, when we refuse to our souls that nourishment which is necessary to their life? Without this food, our souls must perish; and if it be a great crime to receive the Lord of heaven unworthily, it is no less certain death to stay away from these Divine mysteries, in which we may receive all grace and every necessary for our everlasting life. "Lord, to whom shall we go, but to thee? thou hast the words of eternal life" (John vi, 69). O come, dear Jesus, who wast born for us into this world, who sheddest thy Blood for us, dying on a Cross, who hast given us thyself here, under humble veils, that we might be brought to the clear sight and possession of thee in eternal glory; take from us whatever is displeasing to thee; give us a hunger and thirst after thee; inflame our hearts with a love of thee, that we may be ready to renounce forever all that can separate us from thee; that henceforward we may pant after thee, that we may be willing to make any sacrifice which may bring us nearer to thee and thy love; and that consecrating ourselves to thy service, we may receive forgiveness of our sins at thy feet, be nourished with this our daily supersubstantial Bread, and at length pass from a life of grace to a life of glory; from a life in which we adore thee under humble mysterious veils, to a life in which we shall see and enjoy thee without shadow or change for all eternity.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON THE MERCY OF JESUS TOWARD SINNERS

"There shall be joy in heaven upon one sinner doing penance, more than upon ninety-nine just, who need not penance."—Luke xv, 7.

SYNOPSIS.—Our God is a God of mercy. Our Lord's whole life shows this. The parable of the Good Shepherd. In many ways does God try to bring the sinner to repentance—by conscience; by His messengers; by trials and losses, etc. God never wearies in His efforts to reclaim the sinful man. God never forsakes the sinner. Invitation to rouse ourselves from our sinful lethargy; to despise not the forbearance of God.

Our blessed Redeemer, who came down from heaven, and clothed Himself with our nature, that He might bring back those who had gone astray, and save those who were perishing, permitted even sinners to approach His person and to converse with Him, and sometimes He condescended even to sit at their tables, and eat with them. Filled with an idea of their superior virtue, and imaginary merit, the Pharisees and doctors of the law affected to be scandalized at this charity of Jesus Christ, and vented their rancor, sometimes in secret whispers, sometimes in open reproach. In us, my brethren, weak as we are, and prone to sin, it would generally be a guilty presumption to join the societies of the wicked, even from the motive of reclaiming them from sin; but in Our Saviour, in whom was all goodness and sanctity, it was the effect of His great love for sinners, and His zeal for the glory of His Father. In Him His enemies could discern nothing that was not decorated with all the purity and sweetness of charity, both toward God and men: "sin in him there was none." Yet did the Scribes and Pharisees murmur against Him, saying, "This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." To confound their pride, refute their aspersions, and demonstrate to them the ineffable charity with which He was actuated, Jesus speaks to them the parable you have just heard, leaving to them to draw from it an easy and natural inference.

If to recover an animal of little value, men submit to such fatigue; if they take so much pains to recover a sum of money, which, in its greatest abundance, is incompetent to bestow real happiness, and must at last be left behind, can you wonder, and what is more ex-

traordinary, can you pretend to be scandalized, when you behold Me seeking to draw sinners from their evil ways? From the compassion which I show toward those who have strayed from the pastures of grace and virtue, can you take occasion to censure My conduct, and rouse the public reproach and resentment against Me? "Know ye not that I came not to call," etc. Cease then to entertain sentiments of malevolence against Me, to murmur against My conduct, to traduce My character, and by unfounded surmises, and false insinuations, to blacken my reputation. "I say to you that there shall be," etc. By this parable He instructs us that He considers sinners as the sheep which He has lost; that He omits nothing to bring them back to virtue and happiness; that He rejoices in their return, and invites the whole host of heaven, the sacred train of ministering spirits to join with Him.

Let us this day contemplate the charity of Jesus toward sinners, by considering how much He does in order to bring them to Himself; and on some future occasion we will examine what ought to be the behavior of sinners in return for so much tenderness and love.

It is with the strictest justice that the Saviour of mankind has styled Himself the *Good Shepherd.* He knows His sheep; He guards and protects them; He loves them, and loves them even unto death. But when any of us, who are the sheep of His pasture, have strayed from the fold, to wander in the bypaths of iniquity; when, disregarding His love, we have yielded to the bent of sinful passion, then it is that His loving tenderness, contrasted with our ingratitude, appears in the most admirable light. Then it is that He seems, as it were, to forget those who have closely adhered to Him. He leaves the ninety-nine in the desert, and goes in pursuit of the unhappy wanderer, and having found the lost sheep, invites, encourages, and presses it to return to the fold—to His love and friendship.

My brethren, admire the prompt solicitude with which Jesus hastens to rescue sinners from destruction. No sooner does the unhappy offender withdraw himself to a distance from his God, by mortal sin, than his loving Lord speaks to his soul by the voice of conscience, which upbraids him with his ingratitude, unfolds to view the wretchedness of sin, the boundless calamities which are its consequence, and inspires a dread of God's offended majesty. To these interior reproaches He joins a strong light, which exposes the

enormity of the sinner's guilt and urges him to repentance. No sooner had our first parents disobeyed the divine commands, than He "called to Adam, and said to him, where art thou?" (Gen. iii, 9), and "the eyes of them both were opened," and they beheld their guilt and misery. But, my brethren, you need no proof in confirmation of this His mercy. You, who have had the misfortune to lose the grace of God by sin, know the truth of what I assert. When you violated His command by injustice, intemperance, or lust, what were then the feelings of your souls? Did not then the Deity speak to your souls in the secret, but powerful voice of conscience? When, at the sacred solemnity of the Christian Passover, you refused to join in communion with the faithful, by partaking of the Paschal Lamb when you kept away from that celestial banquet—from that bread of life, of which, if "a man eat, he shall live forever," did you feel no agitation of mind, no compunction of soul for your neglect? Did you behold your brethren in Christ approach to that altar, and there receive the holy of holies, without feeling the reproofs, the condemnation of your own conscience? Oh, your "Lord called aloud to you and said where art thou?" Your eyes were opened, and you "saw that you were naked;" and if you refused to obey the voice of God, still it was heard by you, speaking in your inmost soul, and reproaching you with blindness and ingratitude. If, on the other hand, you have dared to approach with a soul defiled by guilt, with consciences polluted by iniquity, or affections fixed on objects displeasing to God; if, like Judas, you have betrayed the Son of Man with a kiss, even now do you feel the sting of reproach; your Saviour whom you have crucified, still calls you to benefit by that precious Blood which your iniquities have spilt. If, after renewing your allegiance to your God, you have relapsed into sin, and forfeited His grace, still He pursues you. The shepherd of your souls calls and invites you, though fleeing from Him, to return to mercy; to seek peace for your souls. A voice is heard within you, crying out: "Return from the ways of guilt and wretchedness, to the pastures of innocence and joy"; a secret disquietude preys upon your souls, and embitters all your pleasures. Should there be one among you, my dear friends, who is so hardened in guilt as to be insensible to the voice of God and the goads of conscience, as to imagine that He possesses tranquillity, while at variance with his God, oh! deplorable indeed is his situation, who, like to one in the delirium of a fever, attempts his own destruc-

tion, unconscious of his danger. Let him not, however, pretend that he is abandoned by God. O no! If he feel not now, as heretofore, the pungency of remorse, the agonies of a soul wounded by sin; if he experience not the solicitations of his much offended Lord, it is because he has barricaded his heart against the approaches of divine grace; he has shut his ears against the voice of God, and his gracious invitations; for he can not say that he has not often felt the reproach of conscience, and the call of heaven, which he obstinately disregarded. For the goodness of God waits not till the sinner has waded deep in the ocean of iniquity, but in the first moments of guilt admonishes him of his misfortune, and calls him to repentance. Instead of destroying the presumptuous wretch who has dared to rebel against his sovereign Lord, He makes the first advances toward reconciliation, and offers him grace and strength to surmount every obstacle; but if the sinner reject these endeavors of a loving parent, adding repeated provocations to his first offense, the God of mercy does not abandon him: No: He repeats His invitations—He redoubles His entreaties; He calls, presses and conjures the strayed sheep to return to the fold, to experience the care of the true shepherd. He follows the deluded wanderer through all the windings of his guilt, he meets him at every turn, and by every interior and exterior means—by every general and particular inducement, tries to win him to the acceptance of grace and mercy. O you who have to bewail the obstinacy of your conduct, have not you experienced this goodness of your God, through every scene of guilt with which your lives have been diversified? When obstinately bent upon pursuing where passion has invited, has not the God, who made your hearts, wished to draw them from sin, by mixing an alloy of bitterness with your fondest enjoyments, and forbidden you to indulge in sinful pleasures with unmingled gratification? Has He not said to you, "Turn to me, deluded wanderer; turn from seducing pleasures, in which there is nothing but vanity, and affliction of spirit; turn from criminal delights, which give death to your soul, and end in hell. Behold, I stand at the gate and knock" (Rev. iii, 20). Yes, my friends, even at this moment, He urges you to break the chains which hold you in confinement; to tear yourselves away from every dangerous engagement, every fatal connection; to extinguish the flame of unlawful passion, which consumes your soul; to enter into yourselves, and once more enjoy true liberty, unshackled by every human

respect, every earthly fear, and every earthly affection. He sweetly invites you to come to Him, oppressed by the weight of sin, under which you groan; with all your iniquities, by which you are broken down, even to despondence, promising that He will refresh you, and give rest to your wearied souls. As He did to Saul, He now cries to you: "Why dost thou persecute me? I am Jesus whom thou persecutest; it is hard for thee to kick against the goad" (Act. ix, 5). On you He calls, who, by your evil example and disedifying lives, oppose the work of God, and hinder the propagation of His faith, the diffusion of His charity; on you, who proceed in a life of indolence and spiritual sloth, and though attending to every earthly concern, neglect or despise the concern of salvation. Upon you He calls, who, knowing what is your duty, refuse, from insensibility or pride, to practise it.

Say not that God has forsaken you; pretend not that He has consigned you to desperation and misery everlasting. If you perish, you fall by your own hand; "why then will you die, oh house of Israel?" The good shepherd, Jesus, the Father and Bishop of your souls, is still in pursuit of His lost sheep, nor will He cease His endeavors to recover you, and bring you back to the pastures of security and peace, till you are irrevocably fallen into the jaws of the infernal wolf; that is, till, rejecting His mercy, you die in your sins! Be then no longer callous, my brethren, to His repeated solicitations and endeavors; compel not the God of mercy, by your reiterated contempt and unrelenting malice, to cast you from His sight forever, "into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. viii, 12).

The pleasures which first seduced you from your everlasting lover, and which still keep you away from Him, do not afford that satisfaction you expected, nor even the delight which novelty might give them; your God has embittered them: the objects which you still follow with unaccountable infatuation, have lost their attraction; your pursuits are crossed with sorrow, shame, and disappointment: renounce them then forever, exchange them for pure satisfactions and gladdening hopes of endless enjoyments; turn to God, and He will receive you, though blackened with every foul offense, and odious with accumulated iniquities: turn to Him with sincere humility and true contrition, and He will receive you, take you in His arms, press you to His forgiving bosom, and, cleansing you from every spot and stain, restore you to beauty, loveliness, and

peace. Despise not the patient forbearance of your God, turn to Him now with eager gratitude, the blush of confusion reddening your cheek, the sigh of sincere sorrow heaving your heart; nor ever more presume to provoke His just indignation. Remember that as every worldly joy will soon pass away, and life itself be shortly terminated, so must the patience of God, rejected and despised, at last consign you to the just punishment of your ingratitude. This may perhaps be the last invitation of your merciful Lord: though often provoked, He is still ready to pardon, but how long He may allow you to avail yourselves of His mercy, He only knows. There is yet time; very soon there will be no more time for you. "This day," then, "if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts," but "be converted to the Lord," with sincerity of heart and serve Him with perseverance. Remember the words of St. Peter, "The Lord dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance. . . . The day of the Lord shall come as a thief . . . wherefore, dearly beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, be diligent that ye may be found undefiled and unspotted to him in peace; and account the long suffering of our Lord, salvation" (II Pet. iii, 9 and *seq.*).

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON CORRESPONDING WITH DIVINE GRACE

"There shall be joy before the angels of God, upon one sinner doing penance."—Luke xv, 10.

SYNOPSIS.—God is always seeking the sinner, always offering him His grace, but He will not save the sinner without his cooperation. The folly of all who will not listen to the appeals of Christ. The blindness of those who delay conversion till the time of death. Hell is full of such souls. Sin becomes easy by repetition, conversion difficult by delay. The sinner should not be deterred by the jeers of the world; or by the fear of ridicule. The sight of his great sinfulness should not discourage him. Examples of God's power and mercy—Saul, Augustine, Manasses, etc. The Cross teaches us God's love for the sinner. Invitation to heed the call to repentance.

I endeavored, last Sunday, to impress upon your minds a sense of God's unbounded mercy to the sinner, in soliciting and pressing him to repentance, and represented to you, though in feeble coloring, what our loving Lord continually does, in order to save ungrateful man; on this day I intend to show you what it is necessary that man should do on his part, that he may cooperate with the benevolent designs of his Creator, and make his election sure. For great and astonishing as is the goodness of the Almighty, in regard of sinners, His goodness alone can not effect their salvation; man must act in concert with God, by cooperating with His graces, or he must remain unalterably fixed in sin. The Almighty must begin the work of the sinner's conversion; His grace prepares the way, enlightening him to see his duty and interest, to know the things that are for his peace, and urging and enabling him to embrace them; but unless the sinner correspond with the calls and helps of God, his conversion can not be effected. "Turn ye to me, saith the Lord of Hosts, and I will turn to you" (Zach. i, 3); which proves, according to the remark of the Council of Trent, that our conversion depends on our own free will, and that God does not restore sinners to grace and virtue, unless they comply with His invitations, and cooperate with His graces. He who created us without our concurrence, will not save us without our concurrence. It is, therefore, absolutely and indispensably neces-

sary that whoever has forfeited the friendship of God by sin, should exert himself in correspondence with the aid of heaven, should *labor* for his conversion. As our true shepherd, Jesus Christ seeks the lost sheep on its first departure from the fold, nor forsakes it in its lengthened wanderings; so the sinner that is truly desirous of recovering the grace and love of Jesus must answer His loving call, and correspond with His gracious helps, with promptitude, sincerity and perseverance.

There are three general descriptions of sinners; the first comprises those who have but recently fallen into the guilt of mortal sin; the second includes those whose crimes are multiplied, by repeated transgressions and the abuse of many graces; the third comprehends those who, having persisted in a lengthened habit of sin, and the contempt of God's calls and mercies, are become hardened in iniquity, and, as it were, lost to God. But to whatever degree of guilt the sinner has arrived, if he desire the recovery of God's favor and love, he must show a prompt obedience to the invitations of his injured Lord; he must, in good earnest, forsake his evil ways; and, never looking back but with horror and detestation upon what he has forsaken, press forward with steady zeal and unshaken perseverance.

Oh, my brethren, if your misfortune be of recent date, if you have but lately left the fold of the Good Shepherd, stay your steps at the first sound of His voice; hasten back to Him who calls you to Himself and solicits your return. If you have but just experienced the misfortune of having linked yourselves with vicious companions, if you have just found the fatal consequence of an imprudent connection, if the violence of sudden temptation has surprised you, if a fatal deference to the seducements, counsel, or authority of others has prevailed on you to your misery, if any unexpected trial has proved superior to your virtue; hasten to retrieve your misfortune, imitate the sheep that has just strayed from the flock, and returns at the first call of the shepherd. Let not the state of sin become supportable to you, by continuing in it; never let custom make it familiar to you; but take advantage of the uneasiness which you now experience, before it wear off by length of time; hasten to exchange it for that true peace which you enjoyed before you lost the joy of a good conscience by sin. Go, cast yourselves, without delay, at the feet of God's minister, place yourselves at this tribunal of mercy, and there becoming your own

accusers, and sincerely repenting of your guilt, suffer your souls to be washed in the blood of the Lamb, and restored to their original purity. The recent wound is healed with ease; but if it be long neglected, the cure becomes difficult. It is not a work of such great difficulty to recover the grace of God, after the first transgression; but if the sinner neglect to rise with immediate alacrity, he soon becomes entangled in sin; he sinks deeper in the mire of vice; his sins are daily multiplied, and with them are multiplied the obstacles to his conversion. Do you not experimentally know the truth of what I assert? Have you not found that having offended God, and neglected to return to Him, your love, nay, your fear of Him diminished every day, the dread of sin grew less, the eternal judgments of God made less impression, you repeated the sin at which you at first trembled with horror, each time with less remorse; other sins to which you were before strangers, were committed without terror, till, at last, you bowed down in willing subjection to sin, and became the passive slaves to the tyranny of your passions. Alas! I fear that some of you, my brethren, too well know the truth of what I say. Like the prodigal son, have you not gone into a distant country far from your father's house, and endeavored to obliterate the remembrance of His goodness, by indulging in every species of excess and guilt? But, oh! far as you may be from your paternal roof, far from that tranquillity which you once enjoyed, when innocence and virtue decked your souls; though you may have neglected and despised the riches of His grace, deprived yourselves of every spiritual and intellectual enjoyment, and bowed down your immortal souls to the indulgence of mere sensual and degrading pleasures; yet if you turn to your God, the true shepherd of your souls, He will again receive you, take you into His arms, vest you again with the robe of inheritance, lead you to His table with joy, and there feed you with the bread of immortality. But let your conduct *exactly* resemble that of the prodigal, recovering from that dream of dissipation which necessarily excludes all sobriety of reflection, enter into yourselves, and compare the misery of your state with the happiness which is enjoyed by the least of God's servants; arise without hesitation or delay; let not the view of difficulties, that may be met with, induce you to a dangerous deliberation; indecision will be fatal to you; but at once resolve; nor hearken to the voice of the passions, which will cry out, as the great St. Augustine tells us they cried out to him: "will you then dismiss

us forever? shall we never more be indulged?" (Conf. l. viii, c. 11). Regard them not; nor listen to the taunts, the railleries of the world, which will perhaps load you with ridicule and persecution if you turn to God, while it was unconcerned at your guilty conduct. Yes; it often happens that the slaves of folly and vice will only smile at the irregularities or grosser crimes of the sinner, but if he turn to God, and lead a life of retirement and piety, they will affect a regard for virtue and treat him with insulting sneers and pretended abhorrence, as an enemy to virtue, a mere hypocrite. But let neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil, prevail over you; pray and sigh before God; make a generous effort in His cause, and your own; follow the counsel of your spiritual guide, who will disclose to you the will of heaven; and soon will the road of repentance be smoothed beneath your feet, you will find that the grace of God can sweeten every sorrow, and render easy and agreeable that which appeared the most difficult and discouraging. Your heavenly Father will receive you to favor; pleased with your return to virtue and peace, He will heap His mercies upon you, and seem to confer upon you a share of affection, even beyond what is enjoyed by those who have never separated themselves from Him. "There shall be joy," etc. (Luke xv, 7).

But perhaps amongst you, my Christian hearers, may be some who, long rebellious to the calls of their Shepherd, and hardened against His loving mercy, flee from Him with unfeeling obstinacy; who, fast bound in the chains of sin, either wholly reject the graces of God, persuading themselves that their conversion is impossible, or determine to trust to the doubtful and dangerous experiment of a death-bed repentance. If any such there be amongst you who now hear me, melancholy indeed is your situation; but would to God that you could be convinced of your misery. Will you still resolve, unhappy Christians (for still you bear that honorable denomination), will you still resolve to remain in sin, enemies of God, and exposed to the continual danger of falling a prey to the infernal tyrant, and of being sunk in eternal torments? Is it that you deem it impossible to recover the friendship of God? While it is your fixed resolution to persist in your evil course, it is indeed impossible; because you refuse the friendship of your God; but remember that He sincerely wishes to draw you to Himself, and if you correspond with His wishes and graces, you will be converted. Your conversion, therefore, is not

impossible; the word of God is express, to assure you that, were you even the most abandoned sinner that ever existed on the face of the earth, still will He assist you to return to Him, and will forgive you your sins, if you have recourse to Him with sincere repentance; and this change of heart *He will give*, provided you seek it with an earnest wish to obtain it. Your spiritual enemies may cry out "difficulty and impossibility," but believe them not; rather give credit to the express promises of God himself. When those, whom Moses sent to view the land of promise, informed the people that the country to which they were advancing was a land that devoured its inhabitants, Joshua and Caleb encouraged them to intrepidity and enterprise, assuring them that those with whom they would have to contend would be found very different from the representation that had been given of them, and that the Lord would deliver them up an easy prey into their hands. "All aid is gone from them," said they; "the Lord is with us, fear not" (Num. xiv, 9).

The same I say to you, my brethren. Be not disheartened; great as may be your sins, by the grace of God they may be renounced, by His mercy be forgiven. Numberless examples might be produced, from holy writ and from history, of sinners deeply immersed in every abomination and vice, who have, by the power and goodness of God, and through the merits of the Blood of Jesus Christ, overcome their sinful habits and become sincere penitents and illustrious saints. Manasses, King of Judah, had offended God by every enormous crime, bowing down before idols, the work of his hands, profaning the temple of the Lord, and making Judah also to sin (4 Kings xxi), yet, "after that he was in distress, he prayed to the Lord His God, and did penance exceedingly before the God of his fathers, and entreated him and besought him earnestly; and he heard his prayer" (II Paralip. xxxiii, 12). With what strong fetters was the great St. Augustine captivated to sin. With what affecting energy does he describe his deplorable situation. Yet the power of the Most High broke his chains and freed him from the bondage of criminal habit, which had become so powerful, that the saint confesses it seemed impossible ever to relinquish it but with life. The same power of God preserved him from relapse; enabled him to detest those vices to which he had been once so strongly attached; and raised the ignoble slave of profaneness, excess, and lust, to an eminent state of piety, mortification and

divine charity. Let not, then, an impious despair prevent you from making a generous attempt to break asunder the bonds of evil habit, while your God encourages you, and offers His Almighty aid; on the other hand, let not a daring presumption of God's mercy fondly persuade you that it will be easy hereafter to turn to Him. Oh, if you think the work impossible now, will you let your deadly foe seduce you to a belief that by deferring it, and by adding to your sins, you will make it less difficult? This fallacious artifice has proved fatal to thousands who are now lamenting and cursing their folly and stupidity in never-ending torments. God has, indeed, promised to show mercy to the truly penitent, for "a contrite and humble heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. l), but the hardened sinner who presumes to reject the mercies, and insult the forbearance of a just God, will experience the severity of His wrath. "Say not: the mercy of the Lord is great, he will have mercy on the multitude of my sins. . . . Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for his wrath shall come on a sudden, and, in the time of vengeance, he will destroy thee" (Eccles. v, 6). The Jews, assuming confidence from the favors they had experienced from the Almighty, vainly imagined that His mercy would forever spare them; but they were deceived; His fury has fallen upon their guilty heads, and the presumptuous sinner will find that the mercy of the Lord will, at length, give way to justice; which will be exerted in the infliction of torments, that will never have an end.

Heap not, then, upon your heads, deluded sinners, the fulness of God's indignation, by the hardness of your hearts, and your accumulated iniquities. He offers you His mercy; despise Him not, lest He cast you off forever. "Thinkest thou this, O man," says St. Paul, "that thou shalt escape the punishment of God? or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and patience, and long suffering? Knowest thou not, that the benignity of God leadeth to penance? But according to thy hardness, and impenitent heart, thou treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath, and the revelation of the just judgment of God, who will render to everyone according to his works" (Rom. ii, 3).

Sinners who yet believe in God, and the merits of your Redeemer, behold Jesus, your Saviour, on the Cross which He has chosen for your sake, His arms extended to receive you, His head bowed down to give you the kiss of peace. Hasten,

then, to His embraces, throw yourselves with eager gratitude into His arms. Soon, alas! very soon, may He appear your Judge, and an inexorable Judge, without compassion or pity for His enemies; for the hour of mercy will then be over, justice without mercy will rule forever. If you reject His mercy now in this your day, He will then reject you, a prey to the rage of insulting devils, and condemn you to be their associates for all eternity. Horrible association; but you have chosen a curse instead of a blessing, and a dreadful irrevocable curse will be the portion of the impenitent. Oh, you have experienced the divine goodness preserving you from sin, and you who have known His great mercy in receiving you after your crimes, be careful not to repay His bounties with ingratitude; and you, who are so unhappy as to be now at a distance from your loving Saviour, the Shepherd of your souls; who calls, invites, and presses you to return to the fold, obey His voice, provoke not His anger, and work your eternal wo, by contempt and disobedience. May your loving Lord, your careful and beneficent pastor, Christ Jesus, who came down from heaven, "to save that which was lost," who, as He himself declares, came "not to call the just, but sinners to repentance" (Matt. ix, 13), have compassion on you: may He render you docile to His word, draw you effectually to Himself, and preserve us all inviolably attached to His service, that partaking of His mercy here below, we may be admitted to the reward of His kingdom hereafter, and there, in the abodes of bliss and glory, and united in the fellowship of purest charity, rejoice together, and together glorify His name for endless ages.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON THE VICE OF SWEARING

"Whoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say 'thou fool,' shall be in danger of hell fire." —Matt. v, 22.

SYNOPSIS.—Christ forbade not only homicide, but anger and cursing and swearing. These vices very common. The meaning of swearing. We shall be judged severely for these evil habits; what shall be our excuse? Anger is no excuse for swearing. Scripture deals not lightly with this pernicious habit. It is offensive to God, injurious to our neighbor and to society. This evil can be and must be conquered. Prayer and frequent confession, with persevering efforts, the remedies to be used.

Our divine Redeemer, in the admirable discourse which He made to the multitude in the early part of His mission, and, which forms an excellent epitome of Christian morality, not satisfied with forbidding any attempt on the life of our fellow-creature, by the shocking crime of voluntary homicide, forbids us to indulge in the vice of anger, pronounces it criminal to make use even of injurious or contemptuous words, in regard to our neighbor, and assures us that whoever is guilty of intemperate, insulting, or degrading language toward his fellowman, will receive a sentence of condemnation, more or less rigorous, as the injury done may be more or less grievous. My brethren, you are sensible that these declarations of Jesus Christ, which will be verified to an iota, are but little attended to by mankind in general. On every side, and in every rank of life, among the higher as among the lower orders; among those who have received a liberal education, no less than among those who have been denied that singular felicity, everywhere are heard oaths, imprecations, and maledictions, either against fellow-creatures, or against the animal part of the creation, or against inanimate beings, or against their own bodies and immortal souls, and this, too, frequently without the smallest provocation or the slightest cause, merely from an impious habit, or wanton profaneness. To such an excess has this odious vice attained, that on the most trivial occasions oaths and curses are employed, to the scandal and disgrace, if not of religion which reprobates the practise, at least of those among the professors of religion who seem to contemn

the doctrines, and disregard the threats, which Christianity holds out against those who violate its sacred observances. Even reason and good sense are too frequently sacrificed to this absurd and wicked practise, so that in order to comprehend the language of some men, it is absolutely necessary to expunge, by a kind of mental obliteration, certain passages of every sentence that they utter, without which the whole would degenerate into downright nonsense, and profane jargon. I feel a pleasing confidence that this too prevalent habit has not been contracted by many of those entrusted to my care; yet if but one has been infected by the contagion, it would be a gratifying triumph to rescue him, and as the danger to which all are exposed is great and imminent, I shall be happy if I can influence you to detest and avoid this common, yet irreligious practise.

Swearing may be understood in two different significations, either in its proper theological sense, as an appeal to God, by which He is invoked in testimony to the truth of what is asserted, or in the common acceptation, by which oaths, curses, imprecations, and every profane expression are understood. In the first sense, it is strictly and primarily forbidden by the Second Commandment, which declares it to be displeasing to God to swear by His holy name, in violation of *truth,* or *justice,* or *judgment.* As to the second acceptation, it is unnecessary to say more than that it comprises every malediction against ourselves, our fellow-creatures, or against anything that exists in nature.

Let me conjure you, my brethren, to consider what the nature is of those expressions from which it is my wish to deter you, and which are so often in the mouths of Christians, at least by profession. It is an article of faith, expressly notified to us by the word of truth, that every unprofitable word will be arraigned at the tribunal of Sovereign justice; that to address our brother, that is, our fellow-creature, in a language expressive of contempt, or injurious to his honor, is to offend the common Father of all, and to deserve punishment. "Whosoever shall say," etc. Of every idle word we must give an account before our supreme Judge, the God of all sanctity, and every idle and profane word will be punished with greater or less severity, in proportion to the malice with which it is fraught. What excuse, then, will you offer for words which are not simply idle or unprofitable? For language that is not merely unnecessary and vain, but injurious—contrary to charity

—insulting to your neighbor, disrespectful to your God, often profane, and sometimes blasphemous? Pretend not that your expressions are not of the blackest enormity; that they are pronounced without the violence of outrageous fury and mad passion; you are convinced that they are displeasing to God, and is not that sufficient to make you avoid them? Can you consider it as a matter of small concern that the name of God's enemy, and of your own, is uttered on every occasion, not out of detestation for him, but perhaps with a wish that he would take yourself or your neighbor? Do you not know that by your engagements at the font of Baptism, you renounced the devil and all his works, and all his pomps? Can you still say, even without meaning what you say, that you wish him to seize and carry away yourselves or your fellow-creatures? Our Redeemer says that "from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matt. xii, 34); and though you do not, on these occasions, stop to weigh the signification of the words you use, yet does it not happen to you, from the force of habit, that in the violence of your passion, you really wish, as far as your disturbed mind can command or direct a wish, that the vengeance which you call down upon yourselves or others may be accomplished?

You allege that, in the moments of cool reflection, you condemn the expressions which fell from your lips in the frenzy of your rage; you say you are then sorry for the effusions of passion; very true, but do not imagine that what you blush at when past, is, therefore, innocent in the commission. Know and be persuaded that if the evil which you wish your neighbor be considerable, the sin which you commit is grievous, and, according to the dictates of sound theology, more or less aggravated according to the relation which the person holds in your regard, and in proportion to his claim to your love, your gratitude, your respect, or the edification of your good example. What shall we say of those parents who, with irreligious and unnatural wish, consign their children to the devil; who, on the slightest offense, committed perhaps without the consciousness of guilt, from the ignorance or simplicity of infancy, burst into rage, and incur the guilt of damnation, while they wish the horrors of it to fall upon their harmless offspring. Oh, monsters of barbarity, can you call down wo and endless calamity upon those who, by Baptism, have been made the adopted children of God, and whom it is your duty, and ought to be your fondest wish, to conduct to everlasting happiness! Such, however, is the

inconceivable malice of men, that the parent is heard to call down everlasting perdition upon his own child, the child is heard to curse his parent; and, as if Christians had determined to offend God by every possible insult, and had, in the language of the Psalmist, "set their mouth against heaven" (Ps. lxxii, 9), they often introduce the most horrid oaths and curses into their discourse, without connection of language or combination of sentiment, as it were, for the express purpose of insulting God, and provoking His anger.

Persons who profess to be the invariable votaries of honor, whose word, of course, should be the word of honor, an undeniable pledge of truth, as if they had lost all claim to common credence, appeal to God on every trifling occurrence, and seal even the most unimportant assertion with the solemn, sacred testimony of an oath. Often do we hear men calling their Maker to witness the vengeance which they are resolved to take for affronts received, proceeding to horrid imprecations, wishing that they may lose the use of the most precious organs of sense, of their limbs, their faculties; that they may be instantly struck blind or speechless, or may be forever deprived of the joys of heaven, if what they assert be not strictly true; when, perhaps, they know it to be clearly false; if they do not perform such a deed, when, perhaps, to perform it would be a grievous outrage against the Lord of all, whom they presume to insult and defy. Oh, it is indeed dreadful even to make allusion to curses so tremendous, and I feel that I ought almost to apologize to many of my hearers, for exciting in their minds ideas of such alarming profaneness; for, as the wise man says, "the speech that sweareth much shall make the hair stand on end, and its irreverence shall make one stop his ears" (Eccles. xxvii, 15)! I hope, however, and this has been my inducement, I hope by the representation, in this holy place, of crimes which almost petrify the Christian hearer, to bring those who may be guilty of them, to a sense of their crime, and a sorrow for their offenses. I trust they will themselves be induced to shudder at the recollection of those shocking blasphemies which they have so often uttered; of those imprecations which they have vomited out against themselves and others, daring to accuse the Deity of injustice and cruelty, and arraigning all His adorable attributes; thus making themselves, by an alarming anticipation, copartners and auxiliaries to the infernal spirits, and making their mouths infectious as the open tomb which exhales naught but corruption. "Their mouth is full of cursing and

bitterness" (says holy David, Ps. xiii), "their throat is an open sepulchre" (v. 3).

Let those, then, who are unfortunately addicted to this vice, seriously reflect on their past lives, the frequency with which their curses and oaths have been introduced into their discourse on every occasion, and with such stubborn affection, as to make their language almost unintelligible, and their sins, even of this kind alone, more numerous than the hairs of their head, or the sands on the seashore. Oh, my brethren, does not the society of men, ringing with oaths and curses and shocking imprecations, resemble those horrid dungeons, where the reprobate, condemned to eternal torture and eternal rage, perpetually blaspheme their offended and despised Lord, and curse themselves with unavailing hatred for never-ending ages! "He loved cursing" (says the royal Prophet, cviii, 18), "and it shall come unto him . . . he has put on cursing like a garment, and it has entered like water into his entrails, and like oil in his bones; may it be unto him like a garment which covereth him, and like a girdle with which he is girded continually," is it to be wondered at that, even in this world, those who thus assail the Majesty of heaven with insult and defiance, experience his anger by experiencing terrestrial calamity? "A curse," says the Almighty, by His prophet Zachariah (v. 4), "shall come to the house of the swearer, and it shall dwell in the midst of his house, and it shall consume it, and its timbers, and its stones. Unhappy man, let it not be alleged as excuse, that it is only in the moment of passion that you thus offend your God, or that the force of habit is irresistible. To overcome habit, is, in regard to all sins, a matter of difficulty; but by diligent assiduity and the grace of God, it may be accomplished; and in respect to this sin, as it gratifies no sense, confers no satisfaction, promotes no interest, neither pleases the palate, nor fills the purse, it should be of all the easiest to conquer. St. Augustine found it so, since he declares in his Book of Confessions, that in three days he subdued it; Triduo moritur pestis. The provocations you may receive from others may be sinful, but can never justify the person who, when provoked, has recourse to injurious or profane language; for it does not serve to remove the provocation, to silence or punish the offender, nor does it make him feel, in the smallest degree, the effect of resentment. It raises a hurricane within our breasts, and in any dispute or contest, increases the violence of the external storm by increasing the anger of the contend-

ing parties; nothing, indeed, can justify or extenuate a shameful habit, wantonly contracted, and impiously indulged.

Stop, then, unhappy Christians, the course of a practise so pernicious to yourselves, so scandalous to your neighbor, so offensive to God. Consider the injury that is offered to the harmony of civil society, and the union of domestic life, by a vice which is at once the seed and the fruit of dissension, the parent and child of strife, and which makes the earth resemble that dreadful abode of misery, where resound continual curses, execrations, and blasphemies. Let the dread of the evils which await those who profane the name of the Lord, and with impious presumption and wild fury hurl the thunders of God's vengeance on themselves and their fellow-creatures, make impression on you. Beware of the consequences of unrestrained anger, which often produces injuries, curses, blows and murder. "Behold" (says St. James iii, 5), "how small a fire, yet how great a wood it kindleth; and the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. . . . It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison; by it we bless God and the Father, and by it we curse men, who are made after the likeness of God. My brethren" (continues the Apostle), "these things ought not so to be!" No, my friends, indeed, "things ought not so to be," therefore, if you have been so unfortunate as to yield to the slavery of this dreadful vice, think no exertion too great, no labor too difficult which may emancipate you from its oppressive tyranny. Let the tongue which was given you to praise and bless the Lord, both here and forever, be directed henceforth to that noble, that delightful end; let a constant vigilance guard your lips, that no profane, no licentious word escape from them; pray to God to inspire you with a due respect for His tremendous Majesty, to inflame your hearts with His divine love, to fill your understanding with a just sense of His sacred presence, and to give you His gracious aid without which all your endeavors must prove ineffectual; that humbling yourselves before Him, and acknowledging your total dependence upon Him, you may be grateful for all His mercies, and may bless and magnify His holy name forever and ever.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON THE OBLIGATIONS INCUMBENT ON CHRISTIANS

"Dead indeed to sin, but alive to God, in Christ Jesus our Lord."—Rom. vi, 11.

SYNOPSIS.—Lessons taught by Paul to his converts. Promises made in Baptism. Have we been faithful? We must choose between the world and its allurements, the devil and his deceits, and the pure ennobling service of God. The malice of sin in the Christian. We must live unto God in Christ. This is accomplished by the practise of Christian virtues—First, by self-renunciation; second, by the imitation of Christ.

The epistle which I have read to you, from St. Paul to the Romans, calls to your recollection the obligations which you took on yourselves when you received the grace of God, in the Sacrament of Baptism. It was written to the faithful of the Church of Rome. The Apostle endeavors to inspire them with a lively horror of sin, and strongly urges them to lead lives worthy of Jesus Christ, whose faith they had embraced, and in whose Name they had been baptized. Having established, on solid grounds, the necessity of faith, by which Abraham was justified, and his good works rendered meritorious, he immediately informs them respecting the duties which their Christian calling imposes upon them; that the old man must be crucified with Christ, that the body of sin must be destroyed, and that as Christ rose again from the dead, so they must walk in newness of life. If, then, my brethren, we, who have been baptized, were baptized in His death, we were buried with Him in Baptism, that we might die unto sin. It behooves us to consider well our obligations, incumbent upon us as Christians, if we have really embraced the faith of Christ, if we really entertain a hope of obtaining in Him and through Him everlasting life. Let us make a few reflections on what the Apostle has generally insisted upon in this short lesson; let us discover what is required of us in order that we may be "dead to sin," and "alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord."

My brethren, such is the grace received in Baptism, so great, in a spiritual point of view, are its consequences, so valuable the privileges which it confers, that we ought daily to pour out our

souls in acts of thanksgiving to the Lord, who gave us this second birth by cleansing us from all defilement of sin. But we ought to remember that we then made the most solemn promises to God, before His holy altar, in the presence of the host of heaven, who witnessed our engagement; we then promised to die to sin, to hold it in everlasting horror, and to shun it more than death; we renounced every kind of sin, without exception; and we renounced it in every situation and circumstance of life; we promised to die to sin, "knowing that our old man is crucified with him that the body of sin may be destroyed, and that we may serve sin no longer" (Rom. vi, 6). Christ has died but once, "death hath no more dominion over him"; in like manner the body of sin should be wholly destroyed in us, and all iniquity be renounced forever. For this did your sponsors in the Sacrament of Baptism stand forward, and in your name declare that you embraced the faith and law of Christ; while the minister of God informed you that in order to enter into life, you must keep the Commandments. Remember, says St. Ambrose, the answer you then made; you renounced the devil and his works; the world, its pomps, and pleasures; and heaven witnessed your promises. How have we fulfilled our engagements? Alas! have we not violated the baptismal vows? Are we not, as if we had dedicated ourselves to the service of Satan and the pursuits of this world only, still acting in direct opposition to the obligations we then took upon ourselves? Whence is this, my brethren? Do you consider this important action of your lives as one in which you are not concerned, that what was then done in your name, was done without your concurrence, and do you now refuse to give it your approbation? Having attained to years of reason and judgment, do you deliberately renounce the service of Christ, and enroll yourselves among the votaries, the slaves of Satan; and instead of turning away from the works of the devil, the pomps of the world, the concupiscence of the flesh, do you embrace the cause of the infernal deceiver? Do you fondly embrace every folly and vanity that comes within your reach, and anxiously pant after those which come not within the sphere in which you move, or do you so far deceive yourselves as to imagine that this lively interest which you take in all that is *temporal,* with the most torpid indifference, and even aversion, for everything that regards God and eternity, is really consistent with what God requires of you, and you have promised to perform? Oh, let us not be deceived,

we do not renounce what we so earnestly pursue and so violently covet; we do not renounce what we so warmly love; nor do we renounce those pleasures, amusements, and vain follies in which we mix with so much avidity.

The world calls out to you to follow where crowds are leading the way; your associates invite you to join the giddy throng; the levity of youth is easily imposed upon by the tinsel glitter of show; while parents, whose age and experience should restrain the impetuosity, and undeceive the credulity of the young, often, too often, encourage, and even point out the way to perdition. Oh, let the consideration of a world to come, of a soul to save, and of a God to serve, withhold you from joining with His and your enemies; from joining in the fleeting pleasures of the world, in the guilt of sin, to the loss of your souls. To sin after Baptism, is not only to violate the most sacred and solemn promises, but is to offer insult and outrage to the three divine Persons in whose name we were baptized: To the *Father,* whose children we became; to the *Son,* whose brethren and co-heirs we were made by Baptism; and to the *Holy Ghost,* who then sanctified our souls and chose them for His temples. On this account it is that sins committed by Christians will be more severely punished than the sins of infidels; not only because being more enlightened we sin with fuller deliberation, but because we defile by sin what was consecrated to God by Baptism. These considerations are little attended to in a world that laughs at sobriety of thought and serious reflection; but let them make due impression on you, that if you have sullied the white robe you put on in Baptism, you may make atonement to God by works of penance; that you may abhor sin as an evil greater than the whole collection of other evils. In short, let it be always remembered that your bodies and souls were sanctified by Baptism, and fear nothing more than to offend Him, by voluntarily consenting to sin.

But satisfy not yourselves with being "dead to sin," but comply with the other branch of your duty, in the full extent of the Apostle's meaning. "Be alive unto God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Jesus is the vine—we are the branches; on Him are we engrafted —by Him ought we to live—from Him receive nourishment and support. Being dead with Him to sin, we should rise again with Him to grace, and walk "in newness of life." This newness of life, and the spirit with which we were required to enter upon it, were expressed by various ceremonies used in Baptism. For this did

our sponsors pledge themselves, as it were, for our fidelity; for this were we anointed with the holy oil, signed with the sign of our redemption, and vested in a white garment; for this did we receive the burning taper into our hands, as an emblem of the faith of which we had made profession, and of the good works by which we were to adorn our souls, and enlighten our neighbors, directing their feet in the paths of rectitude and peace. By Baptism you enter the religious order of Jesus Christ; to Him you make your vows; the Gospel is the rule, and to it you must conform. The abridgment, and the very essence of this rule is contained in those words of our Founder: "If any one will come after me," etc. The Cross of Christ is to be the standard that is to lead you on to conquest, in the incessant war which you will have to carry on against the devil, the world, and your own flesh.

We are called upon to renounce our own will—our natural humors and inclinations; for if they be indulged, they hurry us away into guilt and misery. That inordinate love of ourselves, of our own ease and convenience, must be strenuously combated. In a word, we must take up our cross courageously, and, looking at our patient leader bearing His Cross, and marking the road with His Blood, we must trace out the way He has taken by the marks of His sufferings, and tread in His footsteps, by patiently enduring our crosses and pains. This is the royal road that leads to future happiness and glory; we shall not obtain peace except by a spirited warfare, nor can we expect to triumph without fighting, or to enter into the regions of rest and security without labor and perseverance. If this be true, and revelation everywhere proclaims it to be true, does it appear that there are many real Christians amongst the multitudes who bear the name? What shall we think of ourselves; for it behooves us to examine whether our lives are worthy the Christian name; whether our actions correspond with the purity and sanctity of our faith. Were we to take a view of the different situations and conditions of life, filled with persons professing themselves Christians, how few should we discover who, in our estimation, would be thought to act up to the spirit of the Christian institute? If, beginning with the young, we examine every age of life; if the different sexes be scrutinized, how very few would appear laboring for the salvation of their souls. Many would be found who would appear to be "yielding their members as instruments of iniquity unto sin"; but few who would "present themselves

to God as those that are alive from the dead, and their members as instruments of justice unto God" (v. 13). Pride and ostentation, profaneness and avarice, intemperance and lust; the mischief that walks by night, and the daring aggressions of the noonday devil would on every side be seen; the signs of a worldly, sensual, and almost pagan depravity are, alas! too frequently exhibited; but that purity of morals—that command over the senses—that subjection of the will, and resignation to the appointments of God, which are required to please Him and fulfil His law, are with difficulty discovered.

But let us turn our eyes toward ourselves, and if we find in ourselves that deficiency which our neighbor would discern in our conduct; if we find much more than is to be seen by the keenest penetration of our neighbor; if we find an artful but dangerous pride—a fatal sensuality—an immortification of our passions, and an indifference with respect to God, and the observance of His law, let shame cover our faces—let us blush at that which is visible to His scrutiny, and, throwing ourselves at the feet of Jesus Christ, seek mercy and salvation where alone they are to be found. Let us break through all delay, and without demur throw off our chains. Penetrated with a lively sense of our danger, and a sincere repentance, let us renew our baptismal engagements. Why should we proceed in false enjoyments which the knowledge of our duty always embitters; troubled with the fear of being snatched away in our sins, whenever any sudden death, or remarkable judgment of God causes a transient alarm, but again sinking into indolence and apathy. Let us now begin—let this be the work of the right hand of the Most High; let us beg Him to give a blessing to our endeavors, and to support our weakness, that, copying the example of our Saviour in His death and resurrection, we may enter upon a new life, and participate in the joys of His kingdom for eternity.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON THE MARKS OF A TRUE CONVERSION

"As you have yielded your members to serve uncleanness and iniquity; so now yield your members to serve justice unto sanctification."—Rom. vi, 19.

SYNOPSIS.—Marks of a true conversion—(1) Sorrow and hatred for sin; (2) Desire to cultivate the virtues opposed to our sinful habits; (3) To be willing to use as much energy in the service of God as we spent in the service of Satan; (4) Acceptance of the trials and sufferings of life in reparation for past sin. II. Motives stimulating to courage, and zeal in the new life of justice.—(1) Deliverance from slavery; (2) Continued friendship with God, whose yoke is light, whose burden is sweet; (3) Life everlasting.

Resolution to be faithful.

The epistle of this Sunday, as well as of the last, is taken from a letter addressed by St. Paul to the Christians of Rome, exhorting them to fervor in the service of God, and to a conduct directly the reverse of that which they had held before their conversion. This letter has appeared to the Church of God to contain so much salutary instruction, and to be so appropriate to the general circumstances of the faithful, that from it she has selected many lessons during the course of the year. The portion appointed for this day is equally calculated to convey instruction to our understanding and unction to our hearts; the counsels which the Apostle gives, the expressions which he employs evince his ardent zeal and tender condescendence for these new converts to the faith of Christ. But, my brethren, what he writes to the Christians of Rome is not only applicable to them, or to the faithful of the primitive Church, but to all those who, at any time, have been called from the darkness of ignorance and sin to the admirable light of God's grace. It is addressed to all who have been mercifully extricated from the labyrinth of error, and delivered from the uncertainty of human doctrines and the fluctuations of human opinions, to the stability and security of divine faith. For, to use the words of the same Apostle, "Ye were once in darkness, but ye are now light in the Lord" (Eph. v, 8). They are addressed to all who have sinned, and who seriously desire to turn from the paths of vice to the road which leads to eternal bliss. Let us, then, my friends, for I trust

we are all desirous of turning to our loving God, let us consider the advice and instructions of the Apostle, as directed personally and individually to us, and from them let us discover, first, the marks which distinguish a true conversion, and, secondly, the motives which ought to animate and support us while walking in newness of life.

First. The Apostle gives us two essential marks by which a true conversion from sin to God may be known; the first is, that we make the members which have been heretofore the instruments and agents of Satan, now subservient unto justice, and conducive to our sanctification; the second, that we preserve an unalterable detestation of all that can offend God. Observe that he speaks with a degree of indulgence, making allowance for the frailty of human nature. "I speak a human thing," says he, "because of the infirmity of your flesh" (19). Knowing your weakness, I require nothing from you which can be objected to as unreasonably severe. I might exact from you an ardor of divine charity, a sorrow and repentance, far beyond your former attachment to iniquity; with the prophet Baruch (v. 28), I might say to you: "As it was your mind to go astray from God, so, when you return again you shall seek him ten times as much"; but in compassion with your weakness, I only require that "as you have yielded," etc., that your zeal for God's honor and your salvation, be equal to the intensity of exertion with which you have served the devil, and labored to your own destruction. It is a remark of the celebrated Origen, that St. Paul seems willing to inspire a sentiment of virtuous ambition, and to make the sinner, who professes to turn from Satan to his God, ashamed at the thought of doing less for Him who made him, who redeemed, reclaimed, and preserves him, than for his enemy and ruthless seducer. And, indeed, we ought to be confounded at the ungenerous idea of doing less in the practise of virtue than in the commission of sin, of being less solicitous to make our election sure. than to gratify our passions, and involve ourselves in ruin. Your feet, continues this renowned doctor, your feet have trodden the ways of death, bearing you to seduce or injure your neighbor; let them henceforth bear you forward in the paths of sanctity, to the assistance of your unfortunate fellow-creatures. If your hands have been employed in seizing or purloining the property of another, let them now be extended to relieve the indigent; if your eyes have been turned on every side, or fixed on every object to which curi-

osity, or lust, or covetousness invited, let them now be employed in discovering the wants of suffering poverty, and every means by which the glory of God may be promoted. In a word, let all your senses, all the powers of your soul, and all the members of your body bear testimony to justice, and administer the same service to virtue which they have afforded to uncleanness and iniquity. Well does St. Paul say, that he speaks "a human thing because of the infirmity of our flesh"; for is it possible that less can be required of us on our return to God whom we have injured by sin? And if the God of all goodness and love will be satisfied with this our offering, which, indeed, would be His due, even if we had never sinned against Him (for all that we can do in homage to His Deity is strictly His), yet if this will satisfy Him is it not the extreme of injustice and baseness to give Him a refusal? Yet how many, alas, refuse this small atonement, this indispensable mark of sincere repentance. Who profess themselves grieved for their past sins, yet do not zealously cultivate the opposite virtues; but entertaining a secret affection for what was once so fondly cherished, continue to commit in desire what they scarcely and reluctantly refrain from in effect; who waver in continual hesitation between duty and inclination, occasionally fall into their former crimes, and are never disgusted with them. This is not a sincere repentance; it has not the mark which St. Paul considers as the least that can be required to evince a genuine conversion. If strength enough can be found for pleasure, if, when called upon to partake in amusements beyond comparison more fatiguing than the exercise of rigorous penance, all is life and ardor; if, at the call of vanity, you spring with elastic speed, but when religion urges to turn from false joys to the pleasures of contemplation and the practise of virtue; if then, you are tepid, and slow, and inactive, oh, my brethren, you do not yield your members to serve justice unto sanctification, as you have yielded them to serve uncleanness and iniquity; in other words, you are not converted. How many never want strength for mirth and pastime, for the pleasures of the table and midnight revelry, but to fast, to abstain, to practise mortification, is impossible. To gratify ambition, avarice, self-love, nothing is too difficult; but to subdue the passions, to refrain from sinful pleasures, to exercise charity and mercy, to acquire the several Christian virtues, is intolerable, is impracticable, is beyond the power of human ability. Be not deceived, my friends, never can you prudently persuade your-

selves that you are converted to God, unless you do as much for Him as you have done against Him; unless you do as much to save you souls, as you have done to lose them; unless you consecrate to the service of God those members, senses, and faculties, which you have employed in offending Him.

The second mark given by the Apostle, is a sincere regret, and never-ceasing confusion for the guilt of sin. "What fruit had you in those things, of which you are now ashamed? for the end of them is death" (v. 21). He, therefore, reminds them of the emptiness of every earthly gratification, the vanity of every worldly pleasure. What fruit have you reaped from your endeavors to gratify your passions? Alas! nothing now remains but confusion and remorse; and happy may you esteem yourselves if, by repentance, you escape eternal death, which you have merited by your sins. Preserve and cherish this sorrow and this shame; by it you are to judge of the sincerity of your conversion. When memory recalls the scenes of past follies and guilt, do you review them with horror and shame? Do you lament your sins in the bitterness of your souls? Do you blush with virtuous confusion, on the recollection of your former scandals, and is your shame influenced by motives of love of God, so that you appear before Him in the posture, and with the sentiments of criminals, ready to suffer the contempt of the world, which, by your sins, you have so justly merited? If so; give thanks to God, and entertain an humble hope that your conversion is sincere, that you are reconciled to your offended Lord, and your sins forgiven. But do you not rather experience the reverse of all this? You have confessed your sins; but, your confession over, have you not forgotten your sins, and even that you have been sinners? Instead of submitting to the confusion of your own hearts, and the confusion which your public scandal has excited, do you not revolt against humiliation, and even try to exculpate yourselves before men, by a defense of your criminal conduct? Do you not rebel against the dispositions of the Almighty, by murmuring and repining, and even resisting the chastisements which His wisdom inflicts upon you? While, perhaps, you say you resolve to do penance for your sins, does not the slightest contradiction disconcert you, the smallest affliction destroy your peace of mind, and though the Cross be evidently sent by heaven for your good, is it not still received with impatience?

As this conduct does not argue a sincere repentance, and a true

conversion, let me desire you to look into yourselves, my brethren, that you may discover whether you be still enslaved to sin, or delivered from the cruel thraldom of Satan. If, notwithstanding the violence of temptation, you still remain faithful to your Divine Lord, if you still hear His word, and, struggling hard against flesh and blood, still observe His precepts, be not disheartened. The Apostle exhorts you to perseverance—let us attentively consider the motives which he proposes, as inducements and helps, under the difficulties which we must expect to meet with.

Second. "Being now made free from sin," says St. Paul, "and become servants unto God, you have your fruit to sanctification, and the end everlasting life" (v. 22). Can stronger motives than these be proposed or imagined? Deliverance from the slavery of sin, an assurance of God's love and friendship, exemption from eternal death, and a life of never-ending felicity. These are inducements held out to those who shall persevere in the career of virtue.

These, my brethren, are the honors, this the end of your short labors. Compare with these inestimable blessings what can be offered that shall induce you to violate your engagements with God. Be not deceived; galling is the yoke of sin; oppressive the tyranny of Satan. He promises, indeed, pleasure and joy to his followers; but once enlisted under his banners, he deprives them of the true liberty of the children of God, he overwhelms them with unspeakable sorrows, and finally precipitates them into the miseries of eternal death. Yes, "the wages of sin are death" (v. 23); death even in this world, by the deprivation of the grace of God, and in the world to come death everlasting. But in the service of Jesus Christ what happiness is enjoyed. Our Divine Leader delivers the poor captive from his wretched slavery, and breaks to pieces the fetters with which the tyrant had bound him. Then does the sinner begin to experience tranquillity and comfort. In being delivered from sin, he becomes, indeed, a servant unto God, but "his yoke is sweet and his burden is light." He must offer violence to himself, becoming obedient to Divine faith, and subjecting his passions to the law of God; but Divine grace shall enable him to surmount every difficulty. Happy subjection, by which we become united to our Sovereign Good, and delivered from all evil. "If the Son of God shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John viii, 36).

But, beside the deliverance of the soul from the captivity of sin, St. Paul mentions two other motives, which should have a powerful

influence upon the repenting sinner, "sanctification and life everlasting"; oh, that men would consider them and weigh their importance. The soul that is sanctified enjoys the friendship of its God, becomes the abode of the adorable Trinity, and is abundantly enriched with the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Each day it may increase in the riches of divine grace, each moment it may produce new fruits of virtue; and as the sinner under the dominion of his infernal foe grows in iniquity, and daily brings forth fresh fruits of sin, so the just man advances daily in grace and sanctity; and, as the "wages of sin are death," so is eternal glory the happy retribution of grace and sanctity, "everlasting life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (v. 23).

But oh, how impossible is it for language to describe, or the mind of man to conceive, that exquisite delight, that unbounded happiness, that immortal glory reserved for those who persevere to the end in newness of life. Not confined, like the paltry joys of this world, to a few short years, nor limited to millions of ages, but lengthened out through the round of eternity to a duration unlimited as the God who confers the high reward, and communicates the inconceivable happiness. Oh, eternity, eternity! happy eternity for the servants of God, and "happy they who die in the Lord, for precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints." Oh, blessed eternity! happy state of invariable bliss in the possession of all good, even of God himself; if mankind knew thy real value, what would they not do, what would they not be ready to suffer, to merit and obtain thee. How will, then, appear the transient sufferings of mortality; how cheaply purchased will then be thought the glories of the heavenly Jerusalem. We can not, with all our exertions, merit the rewards of heaven, without the grace of God, since it is by His grace that we are called to glory; yet it is His will that we should be made worthy of His heavenly kingdom, and deserve His enjoyment by cooperating with His Divine grace. And shall we be so blind and infatuated as to oppose the great and merciful designs which he has formed in our favor? Henceforth, and forever, let us bid adieu to every forbidden pleasure, to every false and insidious allurement, to whatever can rob us of the treasure of His grace, and exclude us from life everlasting. By Him, and for the enjoyment of Him, were we created; we are consecrated to Him; let us, then, dedicate to Him every action of our lives, every thought, and every affection of our souls. Cheerfully let us sub-

mit to every trial, readily let us give our whole being to His service, that with all the members of our body, and all the faculties of our soul, we may "serve justice unto sanctification." Let us, without ceasing, lament our past treasons and infidelities; it is all that we can do, with respect to what is past; oh, that we could do more, that we could annihilate our misdeeds; but for the time to come, let us refrain from all evil, and by penance and self-denial, atone for our ingratitude. Gladly let us receive every tribulation prepared for us in this desert of the world, this vale of tears, this state of probation; knowing that it is in the furnace of tribulation that the just are purified, that the Lord chastiseth those whom He loveth, that He only shall be crowned in heaven, who conquereth here on earth; and that the rewards of the victorious are immense and incomprehensible, the sight of God's stupendous Majesty, and the secure possession of Him forever and ever.

EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON THE BENEFITS TO BE DERIVED FROM A FREQUENT MEDITATION ON DEATH

"Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer."—Luke xvi, 2.

SYNOPSIS.—Death should be a frequent subject of meditation—discouraging and terrifying to many, yet beneficial to all. Death is followed by judgment; this thought has made saints. Such a thought draws us from sin, stimulates us to bear patiently our crosses, strengthens us in moments of temptation. Examples. The testimony of Scripture. Frequent meditation helps us in our conduct toward God, our neighbor, and ourselves. Resolution.—Frequently to meditate on this wholesome subject.

The Gospel which you have heard is fruitful in instruction, and is well calculated to draw the affections of the believing Christian from things of this world, to the joys, the interests, the glories of eternity, and, at the same time, to free him from the deplorable servitude of sin, the source of every real calamity, both here and hereafter.

Among other subjects is presented to our meditation the conduct of an unjust steward, who, by a cautious, though criminal prudence, provided against the day of calamity. The goods of the earth, as they are called, are, indeed, employed more frequently and more industriously to the purpose of establishing worldly, than eternal prosperity. We are all *stewards* of the Supreme Lord of all things, and we are no more. We are each of us entrusted with the administration of His property, in the different situations of life in which He has pleased to place us; each has his respective duties to fulfil, and each is provided with proportionate means and abilities. Nor is it to be imagined that our conduct escapes His notice, and that nothing of any importance beyond the present shifting scene of life depends upon it. Oh! it is when the show of this too delusive world has passed away that another world will open to our astonished view—another, and a far more important world, and, according to our behavior in this present state of existence, shall our doom of everlasting happiness or misery be decided forever. "It is appointed unto men once to die,

and after this, judgment" (Heb. ix, 27). "In the end of a man is the disclosing of his works" (Eccles. xi, 29). "God shall judge both the just and the wicked" (*Ibid.* iii, 7), and all things that are done God will bring into judgment" (*Ibid.* xii, 14). Both in the beginning and end of the ecclesiastical year, the Church calls to our remembrance the great and general judgment of the world, and frequently proposes to our consideration the end of man, that we may not forget the momentous concerns of futurity, in the subordinate pretensions of present existence; but may ever direct our views and exertions toward that life which will never have an end—a life of eternal bliss or interminable wretchedness. I mean to induce you to a frequent meditation upon this subject, which is often banished from men's minds as too terrible and discouraging to be dwelt on, by showing you that it is a subject of meditation most beneficial in its effects, and then I shall briefly point out to you the means by which you may prepare yourselves against that day, when it shall be said to each of you, "give an account," etc.

The meditation upon the account which we shall have one day to give to God, of the manner in which we have spent our lives, must necessarily fill the soul with dread, when it is considered that by sin we have offended a God who abhors iniquity, and if unrepented of, will punish it with strict justice. Brought to the bar of God's justice, without friend or assistance, the poor soul will be placed before the Sovereign Judge; and oh! what hidden sins will be then disclosed!—what multitudes of crimes, which had been committed and long forgotten, will be recalled to recollection!—what treasures of iniquity shall then come to light! Sin will then be seen in its true colors; the veil shall be withdrawn, and the splendors of God's countenance shall expose those many secret defilements, which are unseen by the world, and often hidden from our own eyes! Alas! unhappy soul! there is now no room for subterfuge, or palliation; neither eloquence nor patronage can avail thee aught; naked and forlorn, even separated from thy companion, the body, thy good works only can befriend thee. Even repentance is now too late, and one half hour, which in life had been so little considered, so often found tedious and heavy upon thy hands, one half hour is in vain desired. A sentence will be soon pronounced, and when passed, will immediately take effect, irrevocable and eternal. Entreaty and humiliation are of no avail; in life we have a God of mercy and kind compassion; in judgment He is inexorable. Truly

the judgment of God is a subject of meditation, awful and tremendous! It has terrified even the greatest saints. At the thought of appearing before the judgment seat of the Most High, holy Job trembled; a David—a Jerome were appalled, and even an Hilarion, after three score and ten years spent in the service of his Divine Master.

But, my brethren, the meditation on the account which we must give to God is most salutary in its effects. It withdraws from sin, and all affection to it; it is a strong inducement to expiate our guilt by works of repentance, and powerfully stimulates to the constant practise of all virtue. "I have kept the ways of the Lord" says holy David, "and have not done wickedly against my God, for all his judgments are in my sight" (Ps. xvii, 22). In fact, while we have the severity of God's judgments, and the punishments reserved for sin in our thoughts, and before our eyes, how is it possible that we can dare to offend Him? How can we presume to disobey, when we consider that in the very moment of transgression, He can summon us from this life to appear at His dread tribunal, and punish our guilt with the infliction of sufferings of inconceivable rigor, and endless duration? If, on the other hand, we feel any desire of future bliss and endless glory, how can we refuse to follow virtue, when we reflect that our future Judge considers all our actions; observes all our virtuous deeds, and will reward our perseverance with everlasting happiness?

This reflection should animate us under difficulties, and support us with soothing consolation under the weight of sorrow; under calumny and persecution suffered for the sake of God. This should console us, when the iniquitous judgment of men falsely and unjustly condemns us, and the thought of God's just judgments gives joy to the soul of the Christian in the performance of actions, known only to his Sovereign Judge, and performed with no other view than to please his God. "I was mindful of thy judgments of old," says the royal prophet, "and I was comforted" (Ps. cxviii, 52). Let me then conjure you, my brethren, frequently to call to remembrance, and attentively to dwell on the strict account you will shortly have to give of your stewardship, in temptation, in affliction, and every earthly misfortune; but in a particular manner when you are about to approach the holy tribunal of penance. The forgetfulness of God's judgments, and of the wrath to come, is the great cause of public and secret delinquency, therefore David, speak-

ing of the sinner, says, "his ways are defiled at all times; thy judgments are removed from his sight" (Ps. ix, 26). And what the Scripture says of the two elders, who, forgetful of their age and rank, assailed the purity and traduced the virtue of the chaste Susannah, may be applied to all those who fall into crimes, from which we are astonished that mere reason, and a regard for exterior decency, and their own character did not preserve them. "They perverted their own mind, and turned away their eyes, that they might not look unto heaven, nor remember just judgments" (Dan. xiii, 9).

Second. The effects which the meditation upon this important subject will necessarily produce on your conduct, will be the means of making you prepared against the day when it shall be said to you, "Give an account of your stewardship." Its influence will be seen and felt in your conduct toward yourselves, toward your neighbor, but principally toward Almighty God. Toward ourselves we shall be impartially just, weighing and examining our actions, not according to the dictates of self-love, but according to the rules of the Gospel, and the maxims of true Religion. With justice shall we scrutinize, and estimate our thoughts, our desires, and the motives by which we are actuated in all we do, or leave undone. "If we would judge ourselves," says St. Paul, "we should not be judged" (I Cor. xi, 31). By a seasonable severity toward ourselves, we shall disarm the anger of our offended God; by penance move Him to mercy. In consequence of this unbiassed impartiality toward ourselves, our bad habits will be substituted by works of piety and Religion; our evil inclinations will, by careful investigation, be traced to their source; our corrupt propensities will be detected; we shall no longer be affectedly blind to our greatest faults, because we shall be convinced that it is for our true interest to discover and correct them, and, having come to a sense of our guilt, we shall expiate it by penitential tears, and works of mortification. As to our good works, instead of seeking, or desiring to purchase by them the world's applause, we shall refer all the honor where it is due—to the grace of God; for "without him we can do nothing," and instead of cherishing an absurd vanity on account of our own supposed merit, we shall give thanks to Him, who strengthens and supports us, acknowledging that, after all, so little is our own, we are still "unprofitable servants." Toward our neighbor we shall be just and charitable; not unkindly judging, or interpreting his ac-

tions, motives, and intentions; but, in the spirit of genuine charity, "bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things, thinking no evil" (I Cor. xiii, 7). "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive and ye shall be forgiven" (Luke vi, 37). We shall, then, be diligent in giving our neighbor every aid in our power, anxious to afford him every corporal and spiritual assistance, and this, not with a view to our terrestrial emolument, or any earthly applause, but to please the Almighty, and merit His approbation. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt. v. 7); but "judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy" (Jac. ii, 13). Toward God, we shall be studious to do nothing that can offend Him; to omit nothing that can give Him pleasure. We shall love Him as our Father, our Friend, our Benefactor, and at the same time fear Him as our Judge. Walking always in His presence with filial love and filial respect, we shall earnestly deprecate His anger, and implore His mercy; we shall look up to heaven as our true country; the land to which we are directing our steps; the ultimate object of all our desires. Contemplating the beauties of those happy regions, we shall see with comfort the thousands of our fellow-creatures who have reached the harbor of safety, and are now viewing our progress, anxious that we should escape all the dangers to which we are yet exposed, in our voyage through this life, and solicitous that we should partake of that happiness, the fulness of which they now experience. We shall animate ourselves by their example; beseech them to interest themselves in our behalf; and, united with us, in the same communion, beg them to assist their yet contending brethren, and to obtain for us the same graces, which have rendered them triumphant over the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Let it be, then, your care and practise, my brethren, henceforth often and attentively to meditate on the judgments of God, "who will render to everyone according to his works. So speak and so do, as beginning to be judged." This is the advice of St. James (ii, 12), to which I shall add, in conclusion, the excellent and instructive counsel of the author of the "Following of Christ" (L. i. c. xxiv), "In all things regard thy end, and how thou shalt stand before a severe Judge, from whom nothing is hidden; who is not appeased by bribes, nor receives excuses, but will judge that which is just. Oh, most wretched and foolish sinner, what shalt thou

answer to God, who knows all thy evil; thou who sometimes dreadest the countenance of man in anger! Why dost not thou provide for thyself against the day of judgment, when no one can be excused or defended by another, but everyone will find sufficient concern and burden in himself. At present thy labor is profitable, thy tears are acceptable, thy sighs are heard, thy sorrow satisfactory, and may purge away thy sins." Attend to this counsel, my brethren, frequently place yourselves, in spirit, at the tribunal of your heavenly Judge, and judge yourselves now with such a just severity, that He may then judge you with mercy, and admit you into the abodes of everlasting bliss.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON IMPENITENCE AND HARDNESS OF HEART

"When he drew nigh, seeing the city, he wept over it."—Luke xix, 41.

SYNOPSIS.—The picture presented by the tears of Jesus. The scene analyzed. Jesus foretold as the Messias, now rejected and crucified by His people. The Jews impenitent and hardened. Many Christians in the same predicament. This condition is not reached suddenly. The process is gradual; it is accompanied by uneasiness, pain, sadness, longing, stings of conscience, etc. Now excusing, now blaming, at last utter insensibility. But God is patient and speaks again and again; if we but yield, He will forget and forgive; if we remain obdurate, the fate of Jerusalem shall be ours.

A spectacle the most affecting is here exhibited to our view. We behold Jesus Christ, the world's Redeemer, shedding tears over the unhappy City of Jerusalem, in which He foresaw that, in a few days, He should be put to death. Amidst the shouts and acclamations of the multitude, rending the air with hosannas to the Son of David, He casts His eyes upon their city; He yields to the impressions of sorrow, caused by the reflection on the many graces of heaven that had been showered upon it in vain, and weeps over the approaching guilt which was to complete the measure of its iniquities, and occasion its final reprobation. This it is that calls forth His tears, while all around would seem to inspire gladness. It is not the near approach of His own sufferings that overwhelms Him; no, "he is offered because he wills it"; no, He grieves for the wretched inhabitants of Jerusalem, who refused to recognize in Him the Messias, so strikingly depicted to them by their prophets; He grieves at the thought of that train of terrestrial and eternal woes, which they were going to draw upon themselves, by crucifying the Son of God incarnate. Even this His triumphant entry ought to have opened their eyes to discern their Messias; for it had been distinctly foretold, long before, by the prophet Zacharias. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion; shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King will come to thee; the Just and Saviour; He is poor, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass" (ix, 9). This prophecy alone, so minutely fulfilled, ought to have convinced them that Jesus was the expected Messias. But they had hardened

their hearts against the first motions of grace; they had shut their eyes against the light of heaven, and the spirit of obstinacy had taken possession of their souls. O Christians, Jesus, your Saviour and your God, addresses you in the same terms in which He addressed the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He weeps over the multitudes of blinded and obdurate sinners, who resist His graces, refuse His mercies, and defer from day to day the work of their conversion. This is the cause which draws tears from the eyes of Jesus, the Fairest among the children of men, the Beloved of His Father.

That we may guard against this worst of earthly calamities, a hardened and impenitent heart, we will consider by what steps men arrive at this state of insensibility and guilt, and on the first convenient occasion we will take a view of the dreadful consequences which follow it in this world and in the next.

As in the practise of virtue none arrive at eminent sanctity but by degrees, so in the career of vice no one becomes wholly abandoned to iniquity of a sudden. The first steps which the sinner takes in the broad road that leads to death are not without pain; he feels an uneasiness which embitters his pleasures; the enjoyment which he had represented to himself as so delightful, in the exercise of liberty without restraint, is interrupted by frequent checks of conscience. He stops as he proceeds, he is alarmed, looks back, like one who has lost his way; and, while he is going farther from the paths of virtue, he wishes he had never ventured from the region of innocence. He sighs from time to time, yet proceeds; and hopes to stifle at last the painful remembrance of duty, by despising its calls; and to find peace of mind in that insensibility, which is the greatest misfortune that can befall him. Yes, deluded man, when the pains arising from the reproaches of conscience are felt no more; when the fear of God's judgments, and the punishments awaiting impenitence alarm no longer; when you can surrender yourself to the commission of sin without concern, and behold the lightnings of divine wrath with undazzled eye and calm indifference; in a word, when the joys of heaven have no attraction, and the flames of hell no longer terrify, deplorable indeed is your condition; for you are far removed from God, far from His mercy and grace. To this state of wretchedness the sinner arrives by slow, by imperceptible advances; often, at first, by the neglect of small faults, which a virtuous education had taught him to shun, perhaps a natural goodness of disposition had made him adverse to. He observes that some

of his acquaintance make no account of them, he persuades himself that they are only *venial* offences, and, therefore, not to be regarded so scrupulously. "I know," he will say, "that the company which I frequent, the conversation we indulge in, the life which I lead, are not such as to be called the company, the conversation, the life of a saint; but I aspire not to the perfection of the recluse; I am in the world, and mean not to debar myself from its enjoyments."

In the same way the deluded female, who once perhaps had sought her chief delight in the approbation of God, is inveigled into the slavery of sin, from the happy service of God. By degrees she becomes indifferent to the silent approbation of heaven, spends her time in self-admiration, or in decking herself out to receive the fulsome praises of deceitful flattery, to excite admiration, if not a more guilty passion, in others. Hence, perhaps, many suspicious levities are tolerated, because the world thinks nothing of them; certain thoughts and ideas are overlooked by conscience, because they are too seducing to be utterly renounced; certain looks, and expressions, and actions are permitted, which occasion, at least, something of doubt, misgiving, and apprehension; but these are repressed, because to hearken to their suggestions would probably convince that certain favorite practices must be discontinued, that certain societies must be forsaken, and that violence must be offered to nature and inclination. What, then, is to be done in order to gratify inclination, without entirely discarding conscience? O then a pretext is set up which is the ruin of thousands! they are decided to be no more than *venial* transgressions, and as venial sin neither destroys the grace of God nor excludes from heaven, the victims throw a bandage over their eyes and endeavor not to see what they are unwilling to fear. No advice is sought for with respect to these supposed venial offences; they are purposely kept from the knowledge of the director of their consciences, lest zeal for the honor of his Master, a sense of his duty, and a pastoral solicitude for the eternal welfare of those entrusted to his care, should compel him to speak out, disclose the guilt or danger in which they have lived, and require them to forsake it.

By slow, and sometimes by imperceptible degrees, do men proceed to this deplorable situation, and live in it, almost without suspicion of their misfortune, because they are afraid of reflection; and whenever the inspirations of heaven urge to serious investigation, they turn away from the undertaking, as too troublesome.

Prayer is then neglected, or performed with a vacant or distracted mind, an exercise of no profit, a mere lip-service; mental prayer and serious meditation never attempted; the reading of spiritual books omitted as a tedious, insipid occupation, and in their place too often are the enervating fictions of romance perused with fatal avidity. When this is the case, when the exercises of devotion are made to give way to the love of the world, and of whatever in the world is criminal or dangerous, what wonder if the voice of God strike not the ear, or be disregarded? The heart that is enamored with the vanities and follies of the world, will soon be fascinated by its sinful pleasures, and enslaved by its crimes. Coldness and tepidity in the service of God are followed by indifference, indifference by insensibility and hardness of heart; God withdraws Himself, and, seeing that He is despised, abandons the sinner to his own wretchedness. The softness of water is hardened by degrees into ice; "the cold north bloweth," says the wise man, "and the water is congealed into crystal" (Ecclus. xl, 22). My friends, look well to yourselves, let not your hearts be caught by wretched vanities, be not imposed upon, even while you suspect the imposition. You have heard the voice of the Lord; let not Him speak in vain.

If among my youthful hearers, in particular, there be any whose consciences plead guilty to this neglect of God's inspirations; who have been called upon, or perhaps are still urged by frequent interior admonitions; who, nevertheless, feel enamored of this world, and already are yielding to its current; O do not withdraw yourselves from the grace and friendship of God; and though you were even sure of time and grace for repentance hereafter, do not prepare a mass of iniquity to be repented of in old age; let not the seductions of a deceitful world, the siren song of pleasure, or the slaves of Satan, delude you into misery, the heaviest that can befall you; let not the thoughtless enjoyment of this short day of your mortality make you renounce the enjoyment of endless ages. And you, whose lives are far spent, who have sported amidst the boasted but fallacious joys of the world, who remember well with what sprightly gaiety you met the companions of your age in the morn of life, when no misfortune had yet occurred to disgust you with a cheating world! O now that you have experienced more of its delights than you can ever expect to be renewed, and are descending the hill of life into the vale of years! open your eyes, now at least; learn wisdom from experience. Ere the possession of life slips out of your

hands, hearken to the voice of your Redeemer; if, even in these your latter days, you would "know the things that are for your peace"; if, even now, you will hear His voice, and turn to Him, He will yet receive you. His power is acknowledged, His mercies are offered to you, He weeps over you; and shall His tears, His cries, His invitations, be disregarded? Long has He wished to cure your blindness, while you have obstinately shut your eyes against His admirable light. Your pride, your attachment to the things of this world, your neglect of all the means He has provided for your present peace, and future everlasting happiness, will force Him to forsake you, to deliver you up to a reprobate sense, and number you among His declared enemies. Full of pity for His frail creatures, He has again and again urged you to prefer the consolations of religion to the false satisfactions of the world; you have hesitated, perhaps, and half resolved to "seek the things that were for your peace," to give up the satisfaction of the moment for joys that shall never end, when dissipation of thought, your habits of giddy levity have banished the inspirations of the Holy Ghost, the love of God has been superseded by the love of some earthly object or pursuit, the fear of eternal misery has been kept under, if not banished, by the calling in the joys of the present hour; and thus you have gone on to this moment, and are now perhaps either hesitating between the resolution of serving God without reserve, and the desire of continuing your former line of conduct; or else, for so it may be, you are palliating, by all the plausible pretexts which self-love can devise, some favorite practises or gratifications, which it would be painful to relinquish. Know, however, and be persuaded, that the Lord, who now "knocks at the gate" of your souls, and even supplicates admission, will at length be wearied out by your unrelenting obstinacy. Then shall His much injured mercy give place to long-provoked justice; then shall the days of calamity and wo come upon you, your "enemies will cast a trench about you, and compass you round," and "straiten you on every side"; your iniquities shall stand in array against you, the agonies of despair shall torture your soul, the sorrows of death shall weigh you down, and the terrors of hell oppress your guilty soul; "because you have not known the time of your visitation."

The impious now laugh in unconcern, and treat the mercy of God as the defect of knowledge to observe, or defect of power to chastise their contumacy. But, O my dearest friends, whom I now address

in the name of God, my children in Jesus Christ, let me entreat you, if you have hitherto forgotten the "things that are for your peace," and neglected your salvation, do weigh well the importance of eternity and the vanity of this short life; do consider the folly and absurdity of indulging in the pleasures, or anxiously pursuing the interests of this fallacious world. Entreat the Lord that He pour His light upon you, that you may clearly see both the present and the future, that He will teach you to know the things that are for your true and everlasting peace, and give you His powerful grace to enjoy that peace, which the world can not give, but which He has prepared from the beginning for those who love Him and keep His commandments.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON THE PUNISHMENT AWAITING OBSTINACY IN SIN

"O God, be merciful to me a sinner!"—Luke xviii, 13.

SYNOPSIS.—God is infinitely merciful—rejects only those who reject Him and then only after many failures to win the sinner. The character of His judgments and vengeance. (1) Earthly and temporal punishments of all kinds—example, the sin and punishment of Jerusalem and of many other nations. (2) Spiritual punishments—left to their own wicked desires. (3) Eternal punishments. History and Scripture as exponents of this doctrine. Exhortation to heed the warning and to imitate Magdalen in her repentance.

Having, in my discourse of last Sunday, endeavored to convince you that there is no calamity on earth comparable to an impenitent and hardened heart, I shall this day strive to guard you against so great a misfortune, by representing to you some of the alarming consequences which follow this reprobation of the hardened sinner. God is infinitely merciful, even in His justice; He never forsakes those who do not first forsake Him; nor does He suffer the wretch whom He at last abandons to be deserted by Him, till He has tried, as it were, every expedient which love and compassion could suggest; till He has experienced, in return for His goodness, the utmost contempt and ingratitude. But heavy are the judgments, terrible is the vengeance of an omnipotent and offended Deity! May we, my brethren, by a due consideration of the punishments attending hardened guilt, be deterred from pursuing the paths which lead to it, crowded as they are with deluded and blinded Christians, who are running to their own destruction with fatal indifference, or obstinate madness!

Among the evils which wait upon obstinacy in sin the first to be remarked is that deluge of earthly misfortunes, which the Almighty sometimes sends upon whole nations, and which our divine Lord foretold to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as the punishment awaiting their unhappy city and nation for their blindness and ingratitude. Long had He favored them with His special protection, making them His chosen people, dictating to them a law, and providing them with a religious ceremonial by which their worship was to be

conducted and regulated. To them He sent His prophets to bear testimony of Him, their Legislator, their Messias, the Emmanuel, the Prince of Peace; and to them He came himself, being born in the midst of them, in the city, and at the time predicted, with every concomitant circumstance that had been foretold to them by the prophets. To them He preached, for them He performed wonders, "such as no other had performed," and with the affection of the parent-hen, as He pathetically assures them, He had desired to "gather them under his wings," and to shelter them beneath His fostering protection, "and they would not." No; His prophets they persecuted and put to death; Himself the King of the patriarchs, and inspirer of prophets, the Redeemer of Israel, and the desired of all nations, they nailed to an ignominious Cross, and, with horrid imprecation, called down upon themselves and their posterity the punishment of their barbarous guilt, the Blood of this Lamb of God. "His blood be upon us, and upon our children!" (Matt. xxvii, 25). What a load of accumulated chastisement did they not draw down on themselves by this imprecation! The judgment, already prepared for them by heaven, was announced to them by Jesus Christ, and history has preserved to us the accomplishment of His prediction. But while history has informed us of the almost incredible circumstances attending the dispersion of this unhappy people; of pillage, treachery, and murder, of mothers feeding on their own children, of famine forcing open the sepulchres of the dead, and ravening on the putrid remains of human bodies, taken from graves and charnal houses; while we read, from unsuspected authorities, of thousands butchered with extreme cruelty, thousands sold as slaves, and placed on a level with beasts of burden, we ourselves behold with our own eyes the same people, at the distance of a thousand and nine hundred years, still bearing the weight of their own malediction, a vagrant race, distinct in face and feature, no less than in manners from the rest of mankind; everywhere dispersed, yet nowhere settled; without sacrifice, without king, or government, or priesthood! Their tribes are confounded, their families commixed, their whole nation scattered over the face of the earth; and, though frequently possessing that which gives to others dignity and honors, though frequently possessing immense riches, yet held in general disesteem throughout the universe! But of all the heavy judgments which the Almighty has inflicted upon them, none is to be compared with that spiritual blindness and

obstinacy which, with the law and the prophets in their hands, and before their eyes, still prevents them from seeing the accomplishment of the prophecies in the person of Jesus. This is the punishment of their protracted guilt, and even this is foretold to them. "They gave me gall for my meat," says the Royal Prophet, speaking in the person of Christ, "and in my thirst they gave me vinegar for my drink" (Ps. lxviii, 21). "Pour out thy anger upon them, and let the fury of thy anger seize upon them" (24). "Let their habitation be desolate, and let there be none to dwell in their tents" (25). "Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not" (23), "and let them not come into thy righteousness." Yes, O God, thou hast bent their backs to the service of strange masters, the arrows of thy wrath have fallen upon them, their city is leveled with the dust, and become desolate, the tents of Israel are forsaken, their names are not numbered with the just! But, my Christian friends, are the judgments of God confined to the race of Israel? Do not the children of the new covenant feel His wrath, in the terrestrial and spiritual calamities which He inflicts on them? We know that the almighty Lord of earth and heaven has frequently visited the sins of nations, by evident manifestations of His justice; by earthquakes, famine, war, and pestilence; for to ascribe these calamities to blind chance would be the height of absurdity, as well as blasphemy; from the faithful records of history we know that He has laid a heavy yoke upon the children of men, in punishment of their crimes, and that while they suffered oppression from the injustice and cruelty of their rulers, they were paying a debt which they owed to heaven for their transgressions.

My brethren, look well to yourselves. The evils which *occasionally* befall whole nations are *continually* falling upon individuals. Though their misfortune is neither pointed out by prophecies nor marked by public observation, yet often does the Almighty withdraw His grace and light from those who have despised His mercies and inspirations. Accustom not yourselves to think with unconcern on these judgments of God. Be not of that unhappy number of men who, amidst all the various conceits of their imagination, and all the desires of their heart, think not on virtue, or the reward of virtue; who confine all their solicitude within the space of earthly existence; and, in the sincere wish of their hearts, say, "Let me but enjoy a sufficiency of riches, pleasure and health; this world has enough to gratify my heart, and I desire no more." Con-

sider the real misfortune of those who are lost to a concern for their souls, who in their early years received instruction in the faith and law of Christ, who, perhaps, for a time continued to practise their religious duties with tolerable regularity, who even now sin, not from ignorance and want of information, but who, first yielding to sloth and indifference, have gradually sunk into a neglect of religion and of all its duties. Beware of the judgments of God upon you and yours, if you despise the graces He communicates to you; He who has punished whole nations for their ingratitude will not spare you. The nations of Asia and Africa, where the degrading doctrines of Mahometanism, and the grossest ignorance now prevail, were once irradiated with the purest light of religion and science; upon the sees of Constantinople, Cesarea, Carthage, Nazianzum and Hippo were once placed the Chrysostoms, Basils, Gregories, Cyprians and Augustines, the ornaments and examples of learning and piety to their country and to the world. Let each one, while he fears for his neighbor, tremble for himself; let each be solicitous for the conduct and reformation of *one*. This, at least, is in everyone's power. Despise not the calls of God, nor endeavor to form to yourselves false consciences, persuading yourselves, falsely, that ignorance will excuse you, where that ignorance is affected and voluntary. If you have doubts, consult those whom Christ has appointed your guides and counsellors in the concerns of religion; in hearing *them* you will hear *Him* (Luke x, 16). Be not your own casuists, your own judges in your own cause; if you be, you are sure of an iniquitous decision; for the judge has already taken a bribe, and is bought over by self-love. Oppose not the long-suffering and patient expectation of your God; if He has called repeatedly upon you, He will, at length, resent your contempt, and punish your obstinacy. "What is there that I ought to do to my vineyard that I have not done? Was it that I looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it hath yielded wild fruit?" (Is. v, 4). Unhappy sinner, for you I shed my blood; for you I died. In the commencement of your disorderly life I spoke to your hearts; in the midst of your criminal career I called aloud, I sent the torments of conscience into your soul. Did I not call you from the haunts of intemperance and sensuality, from the wanderings of forbidden pleasure, and the labyrinth of sin? But you would not hearken to my voice, you would not obey the calls of grace. Now will I punish your ingratitude; "now will I shew

you what I will do to my vineyard; I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted; I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down. And I will make it desolate; it shall not be pruned, and it shall not be digged; but briars and thorns shall come up, and I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it" (*Ibid.*).

These are the judgments of God upon His ungrateful people; "for the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Juda" (Is. v, 7), the vineyard of the Lord is the Church of Christ; the vineyard of the Lord is the Christian soul. I will spread barrenness upon your fields; "you shall sow, and shall not reap" (Mich. vi, 15), your labor shall be unproductive. But what is a far heavier calamity, I will call no longer, I will turn my back on you; I will suffer you to run on in iniquity, each day increasing your sins without remorse, or further remonstrance from conscience, without further dread of my judgments; I will consign you to impenitence and reprobation. I will permit you to run from one object to another, in love with vanity, and in pursuit of lies; you shall be allowed to entangle yourself in the thraldom of iniquity, to multiply your fetters; and when, at last, you have despised the injunctions, the duties, and the consolations of religion, when you have sacrificed honor, conscience, all that was sacred, dear, or valuable, I will then cut the thread of your life, and let you die, as you have lived, my enemy. For I called, and you would not hear; I drew you to myself, and you would not come; but by your obstinacy and impenitent heart you have heaped upon yourself "treasures of wrath" against the day of judgment.

Knowing, then, my brethren, the origin, the progress, and the dangerous consequences of obstinacy in sin, resolve to shun whatever may involve you in so great a calamity. Be faithful and docile to the impressions and suggestions of divine grace; let not God speak to your hearts and meet with contempt. Beg of God frequently like the wisest of men, to bestow on you a tractable and obedient heart. If you have had the misfortune to offend your God by mortal sin; if you are at this moment conscious that, by it, you are at variance with your God, be careful not to continue in that melancholy state, not to remain at a distance from His mercies, from a false shame; but to turn to your Lord with instant haste. Wallow not in the mire and filth of sin; nor, having once obtained forgiveness, and repented of your guilt, ever return to it by a

relapse. If you even begin to experience that indifference and apathy, which leads to obstinacy in sin and final impenitence; let me conjure you by all your hopes and fears, by the justice and the mercy of our God, who still preserves you that you may repent and be saved; let me conjure you not to lose a moment in fatal indecision, for there is no room for deliberation, but at once resolve to "seek peace for your souls," to "know the time of your visitation," to "be converted and live." Throw yourselves into the arms of Jesus Christ, or, rather, like Magdalen, throw yourselves at His feet; confess your sins with humility, contrition, and love; and He will forgive you all your offences.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON SPIRITUAL DEAFNESS

"They bring to him one that was deaf and dumb, and besought him to lay his hand upon him."—Mark vii, 32.

SYNOPSIS.—Many are zealous with regard to the things of this world, but indifferent to the interests of their souls. What does spiritual blindness mean? God speaks to man in many ways: (1) by created things, (2) by the voice of conscience, (3) by revelation, (4) by many inspirations, (5) by His Church. He speaks to the young and pure; to the middle-aged sinner; to the old and hardened. He continually calls from the life of sin. Finally, He rejects and punishes the obstinate. Both, nations and individuals are made to feel the weight of His anger and power. The history of the Jews, of Asia and Africa, proves this point. Scripture incessantly proclaims the same truth. Exhortation.

While the transactions of the present life are attended to with unceasing toil and anxiety, how few are they who are actuated by an equal solicitude to save their souls. In the concern of salvation men seem to act as if salvation could be attained without much exertion, and as if happiness in the life to come were best secured by being anxious only about the present. But, my brethren, the best objects of man's ambition are placed beyond the grave; and if we are so infatuated as to fix our hearts upon the passing pleasures of this vain world, we sacrifice eternal happiness for the gratification of a moment. Yet how many are there who are thus ungrateful to their God, and blind to their own welfare! How many, who, speaking not to God, and despising His voice, are, by a much greater calamity than that mentioned in the Gospel, spiritually deaf and dumb! By them God is forgotten, His menaces disregarded, His invitations rejected with contempt. Yes, the sinner is truly deaf and dumb, with respect to what concerns God and eternity; and happy should I esteem myself if, by anything that I can say or do, I should be the means of extricating anyone so circumstanced from his unfortunate situation; happy, too, if I can even inspire you who are not so wretched, with a dread of the calamity, and induce you to shun it with suitable abhorrence; I shall endeavor to do it this day; but not to embrace a subject too copious to be confined within the usual limits of one instruction, I shall consider the principal affliction figured to us in the Gospel, I mean

spiritual deafness. In the deafness of the man whom our Saviour healed, we shall discover a representation of the sinner spiritually deaf to the voice of God; and may we all, terrified by the consideration of his misfortune, and moved by the efficacy of divine grace, be rescued or preserved from so unspeakable an evil.

Our souls, as well as our bodies, are liable to many infirmities, but the consequences of spiritual indisposition are much more fatal. As any derangement of the humors or organs which compose the body affects our corporal health, so is the health of the soul impaired as soon as its union with God is interrupted, and it disowns its subordination to Him. But among the various spiritual disorders to which man is subject, few, if any, can be conceived more alarming than that which is denominated spiritual deafness, which is always voluntary, because it can not attack the soul without full consent, and without an obstinate resistance to the divine calls. That God vouchsafes to speak to His creatures can not be doubted. Infinite and eternal, independent and happy in Himself, He condescends to make known His will to man; it is His delight to be with the children of men, to whom He communicates Himself by innumerable ways, and by as many voices as there are created beings in the universe. Who, says the prophet, may not hear and understand their language? "Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world" (Ps. xviii, 5). The sun, the moon, the stars, which display His glory in the firmament, by diffusing light and heat received from Him; the plants of the field, which, by their growth, attest His fostering care; the animals of the earth, fed by His bounteous providence; in a word, the whole universe proclaims the wonders of God's power, wisdom, and tenderness, and calls upon us to love, adore, and praise Him.

Do we not incessantly hear the voice of reason speaking to our souls, and informing us that we were made for God? Do we not feel within us an ardent desire of happiness; at the same time that we are convinced by our own experience, as well as by the experience of others, that this desire is not to be satisfied by any, or by all the goods of the earth? And are we not forced to conclude that we were created for future and greater enjoyments? No man possessing understanding, above that of a mere idiot, is without this powerful, though silent, testimony of reason, and if we reject its admonition, the fault is wholly our own. But besides

the language of all creation, inanimate as well as animate; besides the testimony of reason, there is a more impressive and sublime voice, by means of which God communicates to us His sovereign will, and the knowledge of truths, to which mere reason could never attain. This is the voice of revelation. "God," says the Apostle (Heb. i, 1), "who diversely and in many ways spoke in times past to the fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days, hath spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the world." By the death of Jesus we were delivered from the captivity of sin and Satan; grace and mercy were restored to us, nor did the great Conqueror of death, when he ascended to His throne of glory, at the right hand of His Father, withdraw from men the communication of His doctrine. He still speaks by His Church, which He established upon the firmest foundation, even "upon the rock" of truth, against which He declares "the gates of hell shall never prevail." He still speaks, and will continue to speak to the end of time, by those whom He sent with the "same authority with which he himself was sent"; by those to whom He said, "Go ye into the whole world, and preach the gospel to every creature," and with whom He has promised to abide "all days, even to the end of the world" (Matt. xvi, 18; John xx, 21; Mark xvi, 15; Matt. c. *ult.* v. *ult*). By the voice of His appointed ministers, He speaks to you, continually exhorting you to seek the things that are for your everlasting peace and welfare; "to be wise unto sobriety" (Rom. xii, 3); to "mind the things that are above, not the things that are on earth" (Coloss. iii, 2), and to the *external* word of His ministers He joins an *interior* word, representing to us our duty to Him, and urging us to fulfil it. He speaks to all without exception; to the young, inviting them to prefer the sweets of innocence and unsullied purity, to all the varnished pleasures of vice; to the old, encouraging the virtuous to persevere, by the consoling hope that they will soon receive the palm of victory, and stimulating sinners to forsake at last the ways of sin; to turn to Him at least in the close of life, and to dedicate the short remaining days of their mortality to the service of their Creator, and the salvation of their souls.

My brethren, "blessed are they who hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke xi, 28). But alas! how many hearken only to the voice of their passions! to the suggestions of their infernal foe, and the treacherous solicitations of a deluded and deluding world! To

what voice are the ambitious attentive and obedient; the proud, who endeavor to rise to notice and to power, while the voice of God has declared "that everyone that exalteth himself shall be humbled" (Luke xiv, 11). What voice do the voluptuous hear and follow, who seem to live only to pamper the body, and to gratify the "desires of the flesh, which war against the soul?" (I Pet. ii, 11). The voice of low sensuality, not the voice of God, which assures them that "their end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is their shame" (Phil. iii, 19). These are deaf to the voice of God, by shutting their ears to His word, and turning away from His merciful exhortations. The same spiritual deafness afflicts all sinners, the vindictive, the avaricious, the envious, and all who seek with fond attachment the pleasures of this short life, and love them more than God.

As to you, my brethren, whom God has entrusted to my care, let not what I have said pass unheeded as the relation of a dream, or as a reality which by application you can perceive belongs to your neighbor but in which you are not concerned; much less, I beseech you, presume to turn away from the voice of God, which speaks to you by the organ of my humble ministry; but examine with humility and candor, with a desire of making a correct discovery, and of profiting by the investigation, whether you hear the voice of God with docility, when conveyed to you by the medium of public instruction, and whether you correspond with the interior inspirations of heaven, when conscience advises, solicits, and impels to virtuous endeavor, or whether you rather lend an ear to the suggestions of sloth, passion, and a corrupt generation. But be aware of the enormity of their guilt, who despise the divine admonitions, and consider the many and great dangers to which they expose themselves, by living in such a state of hardened obstinacy.

If any crime can be odious in the sight of God, ingratitude and contempt of His sovereign power and goodness must provoke His anger and abhorrence, and these are strongly marked in the vice of spiritual deafness. What! shall your almighty Creator, who has no need of helpless man; the eternal God, before whom, neither you, in all the imaginary excellence which self-love too often persuades you to arrogate to yourselves, nor the greatest potentates of the earth are aught; shall the immense, supreme, incomprehensible Deity speak to his lowly creature, and shall man—proud, yet help-

less, man—turn away with contempt from the voice of his Maker? While your ears are open to every flattering encomium offered to yourselves, gratified with every vain subject of conversation; perhaps best pleased with that which is displeasing to Him; with that which is profane, indelicate, or murderous to the character of your neighbor, whom you calumniate, because you envy his superior merit; will you at the same time close your ears to the solicitations of a loving God, pressing you to seek your best interests and everlasting happiness? Inconsistent beings that we are! When we speak, we are anxious to be attended to, and are angered when we are disregarded; and, nevertheless, to our sovereign God, who speaks to us, we can be inattentive, even when our eternal welfare depends upon our conduct. For why does He address Himself to us? Is it not purely for our good? To you He speaks, unthinking sinners, that He may deliver you from a most intolerable servitude. To you He speaks, my young friends, for whom I feel peculiar solicitude, who are yet free from vice, or but slightly tainted by its contagion, to call you to Himself by purity of morals and early sanctity. He speaks to persuade you that the highest ornaments are sincerity and virtue; the choicest pleasures those which are intellectual and spiritual; and the best opulence contempt of wealth. To the more advanced He speaks that they may sanctify, at least, the last sad years of life, when its boasted pleasures have now lost their zest; when the world, no longer discovering in them that sprightliness which once enlivened society and diffused delight, now begins to shun their company, to gaze on other stars, which are just beginning to appear above the horizon, and to attract attention; to these He calls, that, convinced of the folly of sublunary hopes, they may seek happiness where alone it is to be found, and may consecrate by repentance the ruins of dissipation, licentiousness, and intemperance. He calls—with unaccountable infatuation they fly from Him, to catch at pleasures which no longer afford satisfaction, to mix in the circles of juvenile gaiety, where their presence is dreaded and ridiculed; they fly from God and bliss, to enjoy a world which is glad to elude their grasp, and will soon be torn from them forever.

You see and condemn this absurdity in others; you have, perhaps, amused yourselves with the folly of their conduct, and now in your turn are guilty of the same. Our merciful God calls upon us in the days of our prosperity, and in those of adverse fortune; He never

forgets His forgetful creatures, but continually seeks to bring them to Himself. Bear witness to this, all ye lovers of iniquity, by reviewing the years you have lived, and the different circumstances in which you have been placed, for you will discover that He has repeatedly admonished you to turn to Him. At the same time acknowledge your ingratitude, ask pardon, and if at this moment He speak to you in the whispers of a convicted conscience, harden not your hearts, defer not the work of reform to another day, nor expose yourselves to the terrible judgments reserved for final impenitence.

When a nation becomes greatly obstinate the Almighty withdraws His favorable protection, sends forth the messengers of His anger, war, pestilence, and famine; or, with more severe chastisements, darkens its understanding, that, having denied the faith, its salutary effects may not be experienced. In punishment of their unyielding obduracy, the Jews frequently experienced the wrath of heaven, and were at last rejected by God, a sad proof of His vengeance, and a powerful warning to all Christians; for their ingratitude to the Most High, the Churches of Asia and Africa, enlightened and edified by the Basils, the Chrysostoms, the Cyprians and Augustines, are now sunk into the most degraded state of superstition and ignorance; for this insensibility to the divine goodness, other peoples were seduced from the faith of Jesus and abandoned to the uncertainty of their own conceits. Hence, at the present day, instead of unity of faith and unity of doctrine, we grieve to behold the extensive dominion of novel conjecture, and the ever-varying speculations of human opinion disseminated through the land, and daily rising up in new creeds and new systems of belief. Beware, then, you, my friends, lest possessing the inestimable treasures of divine faith you forfeit it by ingratitude. Remember that faith, as a supernatural virtue, can not be obtained by the exertions of even the brightest intellect; it must be the gift of God, no less than hope, charity, and repentance. How many are there among those professing themselves Christians who are such in name only, in whom faith is extinct! How many are there who, having long resisted the voice of God, are now abandoned by Him! His word no longer penetrates to their hearts, which they have hardened against the impressions of His grace, and they proceed without remorse or feeling toward the abyss of misery; while others, contented with forming occasional resolutions, which they never put in execution, are gradually moving

toward the same melancholy state, and will, ere long, give up the thoughts of repentance! Then shall God forget those who have forgotten Him. "I called and you refused, . . . you have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you, which you feared" (Prov. i, 24). "Depart from me. . . . I will . . . repay into their bosom, your iniquities and the iniquities of your fathers together, saith the Lord, I will number you in the sword, and you shall all fall by slaughter, because I called and you did not answer; I spoke, and you did not hear; and you did evil in my eyes, and have chosen the things that displease me. Therefore, saith the Lord God, . . . you shall be hungry, . . . and you shall be thirsty, . . . and you shall be confounded, . . . you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall howl for grief of spirit" (Is. lxv, 5, 12, and *seq.*).

Let me then conjure you, my brethren, nor let it be in vain, by all the hope you have of salvation, by all the interest which you ought to take in the preservation of your souls, hearken now to the voice of God, nor be so ungrateful, so insolent, as to despise His merciful invitations. Give an attentive ear to His continual calls; open your hearts to a sense of your situation, if, upon examination, you perceive you have been guilty of this insult to your Father and your God. "Attend, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth" (Ps. lxx, 1). The same loving Redeemer who healed the man, deaf and dumb, as related in the Gospel, compassionates your spiritual maladies, His power and mercy are still the same, and His Blood which was shed for sinners, continually pleads with His heavenly Father, in their behalf. Pray to the Lord that you may be ever docile to His voice, and that all sinners may be converted to Him. In an especial manner, when the tremendous sacrifice is offered up, when Jesus is truly and substantially immolated on this altar, through Him present your petitions at the throne of grace. "My eyes . . . shall be open, and my ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place; for I have chosen and sanctified this place, that my name may be there forever" (II Paral. vii, 15). Yes, my brethren, it is here that the God of mercy will attend to your supplications, for the sake of His beloved Son. Beseech Him, then, frequently and fervently, and as often as you are here assembled, that He will show compassion to you and yours; that He will cause His saving light to shine upon all who

sit in darkness; that those in particular who are dearest to you may open their eyes to see the beauty of His truth, and awake from the dream of sinful indulgence, to obey His voice; that being thus all of one heart and one mind, united in one fold, and under one Shepherd, we may serve Him in sanctity and justice all our days, and be happy together with Him in heaven.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON THE DUTY OF THE LOVE OF GOD

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbor as thyself."—Luke x, 27.

SYNOPSIS.—The most important commandment of the law—its meaning and necessity. Motives: (1) God is our Creator—drew us from nothingness. (2) He preserves us. (3) Does so much for us. (4) Loves us with an everlasting love. Has given us Himself as our Redeemer; His Church; His Sacraments; endowed us with reason and given us the created world as our own. Yet men forget and forsake their God and best friend; barter away His love and friendship for something vain and perishable. Men sell themselves as slaves to sinful passions. Nothing has value unless the love of God is in it. Examples, Paul, Magdalen, Zacheus, Augustin, etc. Exhortation and prayer.

In considering the present Gospel, two important objects present themselves to our view, on which (as Our Lord and Legislator declares in another place) the law and the prophets wholly depend; the love of God and the love of our neighbor. It is my intention, in the discourse of this day, to confine myself to a consideration of the duty of divine charity, or the love of God; for "this is the greatest and first commandment" (Matt. xxii, 38); and if this be fulfilled, the second will not be neglected; because it is impossible not to love our neighbor, if we truly love God. We are required to love the Lord our God with all the ardor of affection; on Him ought we to think with gratitude and delight; with love of Him our hearts ought to be all on fire; to Him our souls should tend, as to their center, and be preserved from every deviation by the irresistible attractions of His infinite perfections. O, my brethren, let us wish that we could love Him as He has loved us! O that we could say with the loving penitent St. Augustine, and with the same spirit: "I love thee, my God, and I desire still to love thee more. O fire, ever burning and never decaying! O love, always glowing and never cooling! inflame me; that being all on fire with thee, I may be all in love with thee" (Solil. c, 8). Let us love this loving God, by seeking Him in all things; in prosperity and in misfortune, in sickness as in health; let us love Him above all, preferably to all, and love no

creature but in reference, and with subordination to Him. If we do not thus love Him, let us at least desire so to love Him; let us pray that we may so love Him; that the fire of divine love may consume our souls, and that we may die to the world for the love of Him, who has died upon a Cross for the love of us. To enkindle in our hearts this sacred flame, we will consider some of the motives which should induce us to love the God who made us, and commands us to love Him.

To be convinced that God merits all our love, nothing more is required than to turn our eyes to ourselves, and to use that reason which He has bestowed upon us. Let him, who feels not a sentiment of love for his God, look back to his original state, and trace his progress to the present period of his existence. While yet lost in the abyss of his primitive non-existence, unconscious and unknown, the eye of God was upon him; only his almighty hand could draw him into being; of ourselves we could do nothing, for we were nothing; existing beings, themselves created and dependent, could effect nothing in our regard; nothing less than God, the self-existing, independent, Supreme Being, eternal and omnipotent, could have called us into life. He alone can preserve His own work; to Him we are indebted for innumerable and ineffable favors bestowed upon us; "in him we live, and move, and exist" (Acts xvii, 28). If from ourselves we direct our view to all that surrounds us, the wisdom, the power, the love of a God toward His creatures are eminently conspicuous; and, while we observe His wonders in the vegetable and animal world the prodigies that are discoverable in the elements, the mysteries of nature, all combining to promote our welfare, we ought to remember that, constituted as we are, the lords of the creation, and, as it were, presiding over the works of God on earth, and deriving advantage from them we ought to love Him with unbounded affection, as possessing superior dignity and merit, and created for an end infinitely superior to theirs. The heart of man is, therefore, made for love; love is the life of the heart, says St. Augustine, and if its love be directed to any object below God, so as to make it the principal object of its affections, it degrades the soul, that noble and immortal principle which can not be satisfied with aught that is not God. For whom can you live with greater justice and propriety than for Him to whom you are indebted for life? Has He not, as St. John observes, "loved us first?" Has He not gone before us in affection; and without any need of

our homage, affection, or life, has He not created a world where we may pass the short space of our earthly existence; a world, not devoid of beauty and splendor, because He wished not our misery for a moment; but a world, as much inferior to that which He has prepared for our eternal residence as He is superior to every temporal good. He desires to unite Himself with us; and when united with us, He will not withdraw Himself from us, unless driven away by our ingratitude. His love is not to be subdued even by our ingratitude; even in our worst outrages He wishes our salvation. His love is insatiable, inseparable, insuperable. Before we came into this world He loved us, and gave us a being; He redeemed us by the death of His only Son; He cleansed us from iniquity in the laver of Baptism; He mercifully called us to His saving faith, making us members of His Church; instituted for us His Sacraments, to preserve us from sin, and even to restore us to grace, if we will return to Him! Innumerable are His favors both as to soul and body! He has gifted us with reason, that by it we might come to the knowledge of Him, and adore His infinite attributes. To the brute animal He has given the wants of the body, as He has given them to man; hunger and thirst, heat and cold, weariness and pain, are common to them with us. But He has given to us superior endowments. To think, to reason, to compare, to prefer, admire, and love. Shall we, then, possessed of reason and intellect, seek delight and happiness in the indulgence of those appetites which the meanest animal possesses in common with ourselves? Shall man, like the mere animal, seek enjoyment in the gratification of brutal desires and carnal propensities, while he has, within him, a principle superior to every earthly desire, capable of rational, intellectual, spiritual delights, nor ever to be satisfied but in the possession of God himself. While men extol the dignity of their nature, and value themselves for their qualifications and endowments, they will stoop to base pleasures, to satisfactions which last but for a moment, and, when past, rend the heart with unceasing sorrow.

O God, how admirable art thou in all thy works! The heavens and the earth alike proclaim the glory of the Lord, and invite us to love Him. The firmament displays the majesty of His power; His immutability is manifested in the regular succession of day and night, and of the different seasons; His liberality, in the treasures of the earth; His providence, in the fields clothed with the

riches of the harvest; His stupendous greatness, in the precipice, the torrent, and the volcano; in the wonders of earth, air, and water; in that globe of unextinguished fire, which diffuses light and heat, animation, and fertility; all that we feel or behold, or comprehend, tends to raise and cherish in us a sense of God's goodness toward us, and to fill our souls with gratitude and love.

But have we not, from our ingratitude itself, had reason to throw ourselves at His feet, and in humble prostration to thank Him for His forbearance? Have none of us been so unhappy as to violate this law of nature itself, by resisting His attractions, and pursuing base and filthy pleasures, objects unworthy of our regard? Ungrateful people, said Moses to the Israelites, has not God yet done sufficient to engage your love? Do you require new blessings, new prodigies in your favor? Have you forgotten the water separated, and suspended to deliver you from the hands of your enemies? Have you forgotten the manna which fell from heaven for your nourishment? Have you forgotten the numberless benefits of your God, supporting your steps, directing all your ways, and with a strong hand and extended arm protecting you from danger? Infatuated race! loaded with favors from Him, witnesses of His miracles in your behalf, you set your hearts upon any other than your God! O my friends, are not the same reproaches due to us? That the Almighty should place His affection upon so insignificant a being as man, even in his purest state upon earth, is, in truth, astonishing; but that man possessed of sense and reason, capable of loving, and incapable of life without love, should nevertheless love, and not love God, is an instance of ingratitude and perversity, which, if well considered, must make us despise our judgment and abhor our own hearts! That a commandment should be requisite to make us love God is wonderful; but that the commandment should be neglected is truly inconceivable! You run after creatures, at best but faint representations of that assemblage of infinite perfections, which are the attributes and essence of the Creator, while His adorable and transcendent beauties you despise! What is there that can captivate our hearts, and seduce them from the love of God? Is it that imaginary beauty on which your thoughts are so frequently fixed? O paltry beauty, perishable charms! What are ye when placed in competition with Him who formed you, and who has decked out thousands with equal or superior attractions in never-ending variety of grace and excellence? What

art thou, O gaudy fading flower, compared with that uncreated beauty, immortal and unchangeable! Can genius, wit, or talent captivate our admiration and love? But know ye not that man's best light is darkness in comparison with that inaccessible light, which, at one glance, pervades and scrutinizes all that exists on earth, in hell, in heaven, reaching at once from the beginning to the end of time, from eternity to eternity? Wisdo· , power, justice and goodness, with every quality and endowment, that can please the heart or captivate the understanding, are but the gifts, the eleemosynary dispensations, which He has been pleased to dole out to His indigent creatures.

O, then, my beloved friends, since this is the first and greatest commandment of God, see that you fulfil it. Without it, though you were to speak in divers tongues, or see through the vale of futurity, or possess the knowledge of mysteries, you would be nothing. Were your faith strong enough to move mountains, you were nothing without charity Were you to lower yourselves even to the abyss of your own nothingness, if it were not the love of God that bore you down in true humility, your degradation would effect nothing for heaven. Were you, like Zacchæus, to give the half of your substance to the poor, if your heart were not united to God by charity, your liberality would be without effect. Like Stephen, were you to pray for your persecutors, or, like Laurence, to give your bodies to the flames, it would avail nothing without the love of God. All the outward show of splendid achievement is as a statue of gold raised upon a base of earth, a magnificent edifice upon a hill of sand. But when divine charity once possesses the soul, every virtue follows in its train, every passion of the heart is directed toward the performance of God's will. When one passion predominates, the others are ever subservient to its mandates. The *jealousy* of Saul is gratified, though at the expense of justice and humanity; the *ambition* of Jezebel, the *avarice* of Judas, impel their victims to the extremity of guilt. The avaricious resign every earthly as well as heavenly hope and expectation, that they may enlarge the idol of their adoration; the voluptuous sacrifice honor, interest, and repose to pleasure, while the ambitious give all that others deem valuable, for a breath of air, for empty applause and honors. Health, reputation, friendship, and fortune, every law, human and divine, is trampled under foot, to gratify the passion which predominates in the heart.

A cruel servitude this, my brethren; but let the heart exchange its object, let it (if I may be allowed the expression) make divine love its ruling passion; soon will a pure, a sacred flame be enkindled, and consume whatever it encounters. Soon will the fury of criminal passions subside, and gradually die away; the love of God, strong as death, will triumph over every inordinate passion and desire, will extinguish them all, or, rather, making them subservient to itself, bear them all away in its own course, give them all the same direction. As they had before been devoted to criminal objects, they will now be consecrated to God. The tender endearments of Magdalen, the headstrong impetuosity of Augustin, will be directed to God, and employed in His service; and having been the principal, the source, the instruments of sin, they will become the springs and energies of virtue. Behold the illustrious convert, St. Paul, from a fiery zealot and an unrelenting persecutor of Jesus Christ and of His followers become at once an ardent lover of his Saviour. Hear him, with firm faith and glowing charity, bidding defiance to all creatures to seduce him from the love of Jesus. "Who shall separate us" (he exclaims Rom. viii, 35) "from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or hunger, or nakedness, or danger, or persecution, or the sword?" But tribulation is nothing to the heart where divine love predominates; distress of no account where charity possesses the soul. Imprisonment and chains weigh not where love supports the burden. As to danger, what have I to fear? If God is with me, who shall be against me? Even death shall not intimidate me; for "death is my gain" (Phil. i, 21). No, continues the Apostle, "neither life, nor death, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any creature shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus Our Lord" (Rom. viii, 38).

This holy ardor of divine love, which the ignorant, the worldly, and the profane, vilify and deride as enthusiasm and insanity, glowed with constant fervor in the soul of the Apostle, and made him long for the period which should dissolve the fabric of his body, and set his soul free to seek his best beloved. But remember, my friends, that to you also it is given to fortify your soul against the powers of earth and hell by this strong defense of divine charity. God himself will be your protector and defense; for "God is charity; and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him"

(I John iv, 16). If you love the things of the earth, you are *earthly;* if the things that are in heaven, you become *heavenly;* seeking God in all things. Could each of us cry out, with St. Peter, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee!" (John, *ult.*), happy indeed should we be. Let us at least desire to love Him, and beseech Him to give us the virtue of divine love. O God! O Father! thou knowest, though to us it is a secret, since nothing is more hidden from us, than the interior of our hearts, thou knowest the real tendency of our affections. We desire, at least, to love thee, though we are sensible that we love thee not enough. Thou seest our desires, since they come from thee. Thou inspirest us with a wish to love thee without measure; consider not the torrent of iniquity that overflows and lays waste to our souls; teach us, we beseech thee, now at last to begin to love thee, make us sensible of thy loveliness, that we may despise all other love, out of love for thee. Teach us to love thee daily more and more, that, allured by thy love, we may follow thee, and be brought, at length, to the mansions of life and love, and to the possession of thee, who art the true and never-ending object and reward of love.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON THE DUTY OF GRATITUDE

"There is none found to return and give glory to God, but this stranger."—Luke xvii, 18.

SYNOPSIS.—Man abhors the vice of ingratitude. Description of the leper and the cure as related in the Gospel. The ingratitude of the nine. How frequently is this scene reenacted in daily life. Our debt to God as told us by reason and revelation what was demanded by the Old Law; what by the New. The three constituents of gratitude—(1) esteem, (2) acknowledgment of the favor, (3) a return in proportion to our ability. Examine as to whether we have fulfilled our duty in these three particulars. Exhortation to do so more faithfully in the future.

There is hardly a vice of which man is guilty that is usually more severely condemned than the vice of ingratitude; and the instance presented to us in this Gospel exhibits it in a point of view that must excite our utmost abhorrence. Leprosy is a disorder of the most loathsome and humiliating nature. Those afflicted with it were, by the command of God, separated from the society of their fellowmen, from the city and the camp; had their "clothes hanging loose," their "heads bare," their "mouths covered with a cloth," and were to "proclaim" to all that they were "unclean." Compelled to range the open country, abandoned by their relatives, their friends, and the whole community, they received at a distance the relief of the charitable and humane, which was often barely sufficient to support nature (Lev. xiii). With this hideous calamity were the persons afflicted who presented themselves before Our Lord. Exiled from the cheerful haunts of society, and conscious of their forlorn condition, they stood at a distance, and "lifted up their voice, saying, Jesus, Master, have mercy on us" v. 13). Moved to compassion at their distress, and prevailed upon by the earnest entreaties which they poured out, our Redeemer orders them straightway to "shew themselves to the priests," as enjoined by the law. "And it came to pass that, as they went, they were cleansed" (v. 14).

One would imagine that persons, freed from so shocking a disorder, restored to health and credit, to social life and social enjoyment, would have expressed their gratitude by the liveliest ac-

knowledgments. But it was not so. While suffering under calamity, they approached with suppliant cries, invoking aid from Jesus Christ; but when, by His mercy, they were healed, they forgot the hand from which they had received the signal favor. One only of the ten, "when he saw that he was cleansed, went back, and with a loud voice glorified God" (v. 15). O, my brethren, how exactly does this narration correspond with what is every day seen among mankind! While suffering distress, they cry out to God, but if He raises them from sickness or trouble, they forget His mercy, and are guilty of increased iniquity. We have all received innumerable favors from the hands of God; for what have we that we have not received from Him? and for all that we have received we owe an indispensable return of gratitude. To a discharge of this essential duty I mean to exhort you, by calling to your recollection some of the motives which claim your gratitude; and, in the second place, to direct you in the performance of this duty, by informing you in what this gratitude consists.

With respect to the favors we receive from one another, we should, in general, be ashamed to let any pass without expressing our sense of gratitude; but those which we have received from God are at once so numerous and transcendent, both in the order of nature and of grace, that to forget the donor would argue an extreme stupidity, and to disregard them, when remembered, must be the most consummate baseness. Both reason and religion tell us of our obligations. Reason informs us that from God we received our souls, our bodies, and every external blessing; that for our convenience, use, and benefit, he formed the spacious firmament, with those resplendent orbs which irradiate the vast expanse of heaven; that for our direct, or intermediate, advantage or comfort, He has stocked the earth, air, and waters with bird, and beast, and fish; that, consequently, we are indebted to Him for all that is within us and without us; for all that we have, and all that we are. By the light of faith, and the communication of religion, we are informed that, by an effect of pure generosity, God has created us for a supernatural destiny, for eternal happiness, to behold Him as He is in Himself, and to enjoy Him forever in heaven. By faith we discover that the God who created us has so loved His creatures as to send into this world His own eternal Son to redeem us from the wretched slavery under which we groaned, in consequence of sin, to purchase our freedom and reinstate us in our forfeited rights,

at a great price, no less than the death of this Man-God upon a Cross. But to enumerate the various favors received from heaven would be a fruitless attempt. Each one, upon reflection, will discover a thousand mercies and graces bestowed upon himself; some have received the invaluable blessing of uninterrupted health, some success in their worldly concerns, far beyond their expectations; to these He restored health and vigor, when the original weakness and delicacy of habit, or a constitution impaired by guilty excesses, had seemed to doom them to perpetual affliction; to those He has given the comforts of life, to which their origin in no way appeared to entitle them; others He has blessed with the patronage of steady friends, and, through the medium of His own creatures, preserved them in virtuous innocence, amidst the nipping frosts of poverty, or the blandishments and seductions of vice; while many have been, by an almost visible miracle, reclaimed from the ways of sin, and, from an abyss of iniquity, restored to grace and mercy.

But who shall recount the wonders of God's goodness and love toward His creatures? He has implanted, too, in the human breast, a natural sentiment of gratitude; and, therefore, in despising and disregarding God's bounty we oppose the best propensities of our nature, and resist the native inclinations of our hearts. Even by a positive precept we are called upon and commanded to express our gratitude to our supreme and sovereign Benefactor. In the old law the Sabbath was sanctified in an especial manner; that by a solemn rest from every earthly work, and a consecration of the day to the service of God, an acknowledgment might be made of the divine power and goodness, and of man's dependence. In particular the remembrance of the formation of man, and the creation of the world was renewed by this weekly solemnity. By the feasts of the Passover, of Pentecost, of Tabernacles, the Ruler of the Universe, and the Lord of all things, was adored and blessed for the deliverance of His people from the bondage of Egypt, and for transporting them, with powerful hand and outstretched arm, through the waters of the Red Sea; for the promulgation of His law upon Mount Sinai, and for His gracious protection of His people, during forty years, that the children of Israel dwelt in tabernacles, while they sojourned in the desert. On these, and on other occasions, "were offered up to the Lord oblations, holocausts, and libations, according to the rite of each day" (Lev. xxiii, 37), and, for the same purpose of gratitude and thanksgiving, were

offered up to God the first born of male children, and of every animal, and the sacrifices denominated *eucharistic,* from their being offered for the express intention of giving thanks to the Deity for all His gifts and blessings. These festivals and sacrifices cease to be celebrated for the same particular ends, since the coming of Christ; but they have given way to other festivals of more solemn worship, and to a sacrifice of which those of the Jewish law were mere figures. The Sabbath has been transferred to the Sunday or the Lord's Day, in remembrance of Our Lord's resurrection from the dead, and of the descent of the Holy Ghost on that day, by which a more excellent law was promulgated, not in thunder and lightning, but in tongues, endued with the fire of the Holy Spirit, imparting the wonders of divine grace to the Apostles; and hence "their sound hath gone forth into all the earth; and their words unto the end of the world" (Ps. xviii, 5). On the other feasts of the new law we celebrate the mysteries of our Redeemer, and extol His power and goodness, in enabling our weak brethren to triumph over Satan and sin; we are animated to an imitation of their virtues, by contemplating their rewards, and by the "communion of saints," by which an intercourse is kept up between the saints in glory, and the church militant on earth. All of us are then required, by reason and revelation, and by the express injunction of God, to testify our acknowledgments for His mercies, "giving thanks," as the Apostle says to the Ephesians (v. 20), "always, for all things, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, to God and the Father."

Let us now examine in what our gratitude should consist, that we may know whether we have complied with our duty. The great St. Thomas Aquinas, treating upon gratitude, reduces its duties to the three principal heads. The first is a *sense* and *esteem* of a favor received, the second is the *acknowledgment* of the favor, by an expression of thankfulness; and the third is the making a *return* to our Benefactor in proportion to our ability. We must, therefore, endeavor justly to appreciate the bounty and generosity of God in our regard by frequently calling to our recollection His gifts and graces, by ruminating upon their inestimable value, all tending to confer immortal bliss upon those who once had neither life nor being, but received existence, only to be made, as St. Paul expresses it, "partakers of a heavenly calling, partakers of Christ" (Heb. iii, 1, 14). We must also, with willing hearts, acknowledge

and proclaim aloud the wonderful goodness of God in our regard. With the Psalmist ought we to cry out: "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will declare what great things he hath done for my soul" (lxv, 16). This thanksgiving should you give to God the Father at all times, through Jesus Christ; "through him" . . . says the Apostle, "let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually . . . giving glory to his name" (Heb. xiii, 15).

But, is it sufficient barely to acknowledge and praise the bounty of our God? No, my brethren, the principal duty, the only real proof of a grateful heart, is to make a return to Him, according to the full of our limited means and capacity; by employing the gifts of God according to His intentions and commands, for His honor, and our salvation. It is for you to examine whether you have performed this indispensable duty; to inquire whether you have ever yet been truly sensible that you were indebted to God for what you have received from Him, or whether you have not been as cold and negligent in thanking Him as if all that you had came from yourselves, and was held in unalienable and independent possession. Alas! with what daring insolence do men turn against God the gifts He has bestowed! Instead of making friends of the mammon of iniquity, by relieving the distressed members of Jesus Christ, riches are employed for vicious purposes, and the *superfluous* is considered, not as the patrimony of the poor, deposited as a trust for their benefit, though undoubtedly this is the case, but as showered down upon them for any mode of expenditure, which folly, dissipation, or licentiousness shall inspire. The *superfluous*—that is, whatever exceeds the exigencies of a creditable and decent maintenance, suitable to a man's situation and rank in life—ought to be devoted to acts of benevolence; and yet, as if God gave riches merely to encourage an unfeeling selfishness, the world imagines that whatever can be spared above the usual claims of domestic life and situation, can be squandered, just as extravagance or whim may dictate.

Power and authority are too frequently made, not the means of protection to the weak, but of oppression to the helpless—and wit and genius not the medium by which truth is disseminated, true religion propagated, and virtue diffused and defended, but by which prejudices are confirmed, religion vilified and calumniated, virtue betrayed and ruined. Thus the Almighty's gifts are turned against Him, by being made to minister unto the passions of ungrateful man! Were we seriously to reflect from whom we have received

every smallest good which we possess, and every greater blessing, were to bear in mind the generous liberality of our God, and of our undeservedness, we should exclaim with wonder and gratitude: "O Lord, our Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man, that thou visitest him! . . . admirable is thy name in all the earth!" (Ps. viii, 5, 10). Not satisfied with an interior acknowledgment of His goodness, we should, on every occasion, extol His bounty, and never arrogate to ourselves that merit which is His due. When we seek the applause of men; when poor mortals make a display of their riches, power, genius, or beauty, do they not forget that they are making a boast of what is not their own? That like menial servants who, in the absence of their master, assume a consequence from His superiority, and ridiculously attempt to shine in His character; poor, weak, unthinking man glories in what is not his own, but only entrusted to his custody, by his supreme Lord and Master. Let us, then, cease to value ourselves for what belongs to God. "What hast thou, that thou hast not received? but if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received?" (I Cor. iv, 7).

Let us praise the Lord for all His wonders, goodness, and love; let us give thanks to God, through Jesus Christ, "to the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever!" (I Tim. i, 17). Let us dedicate all the powers of our souls, and all the faculties of our bodies to Him who gave them; let us bless Him, if He bestow upon us the good things of the earth, and use them with moderation; and let us adore His wisdom if He afflicts us here with adversity, and reserves His favors for the life to come. In sickness and in health, in disappointment and sorrow, as in the full tide of prosperity, let us give praise to God; let us magnify the Lord, and own the wisdom of His decrees.

With these sentiments, my brethren, you will never despond; whatever terrestrial calamities befall you, calm resignation will still hold her seat within your breasts, and heavenly hope will dart a ray of cheering consolation athwart the gloom of earthly misfortunes; and if you are elevated to a view of brighter prospects, you will be thankful and serene, remembering that every best gift and "every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James i, 17). Attentive to your spiritual wants, you will expose them to your heavenly physician; like the lepers you will cry with a loud voice and fervent heart,

"Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" Beg of Him that if you be in sin He will heal the maladies of your souls; if in the state of His holy grace, that He will preserve to you that best and choicest happiness. He will hear the prayer that is poured out to Him with humility, and a grateful feeling for His innumerable blessings; and if you continue in Christian perseverance, serving Him in holiness and justice all your days, He will take you to His heavenly kingdom, where, in the company of all the saints, you will sing canticles of jubilation and thanksgiving, for all eternity.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON SERVING GOD WITH LOVE AND AFFECTION

"No man can serve two masters."—Matt. vi, 24.

SYNOPSIS.—The meaning of serving two masters. The motives which urge men to action, viz., ambition, self-interest, affection, necessity. Motives which urge to the service of God. Motives founded on (1) God. God is our Creator, Preserver, Redeemer, Helper, Merciful Father, Friend. (2) On ourselves: our peace and welfare here—our reward in heaven. What have we done so far? What are we willing to do in the future?

My brethren, these are the words of Jesus Christ himself, and they contain a proposition of the last importance to the children of men. Happy they, who, seriously weighing its momentous signification, have been engaged in an honorable service; who, with this truth ever before their eyes, have by it regulated their lives and despising the fleeting pleasures of this life, despising too its transitory pains and evils, have courageously pushed forward to the joys and glories of the life to come, strong in the protection of God, and upheld by His assistance. But, alas! in reviewing the days that have gone over our heads, how few can console themselves that they have preserved in their hearts, and in the practise of their lives, a steady conformity with the divine Will! how few who have not been cold and indifferent; few who have not renounced His love and service, by submitting to the slavery of the passions, or at least have not attempted to divide their services and affections between God and the world, to indulge in the vanities and pleasures which withdraw from God, yet flattering themselves with a hope of partaking in the joys of eternity. This, my friends, is an attempt to serve two masters, to save your souls without resigning any gratification which the corruption of self-love has solicited. This is the case with those who have not discarded the sentiments which religion, a virtuous education, and the good conduct of others have impressed upon their early minds, yet endeavor to combine the love and service of God with love of riches and every earthly satisfaction which is not branded with infamy, but is accredited by the world. To preserve

you from the deception, if you are not unwilling to be undeceived, and to prevail upon you to be truly wise, by assidiously attending to your best interests, I shall endeavor to impress you with a sense of the obligation incumbent upon all, of serving the Lord of heaven and earth with inviolable attachment and supreme affection.

In the services which men perform toward each other, they are influenced by a variety of motives. Some, impelled by ambition and a love of glory, attach themselves to princes and potentates, while others do the same from the meaner motive of interest and the accumulation of wealth. Actuated by better sentiments, children assist and befriend their parents from a principle of gratitude and filial love, which nature inspires, and reason and religion approve: friends administer reciprocal kindness in different acts of pure benevolence, from the inducement of mutual attachment, and mutual affection; while some are employed in various services to their fellow-creatures, constrained by hard necessity, and their state of life. But, my brethren, all and each of these motives concur in calling us to the service of the Almighty, honor, duty, interest and happiness. Yes, "it is great glory to follow the Lord" (Eccles. xxiii, 38). If the service of earthly princes be honorable; if, in their cause, men refuse not to meet the greatest dangers, and if they fall in their defense amidst the horrors of bloodshed, and cheerfully expire on the field of battle, consoling themselves with the thought that they die on a bed of honor; how much more glorious is it to serve the King of Kings, and to receive the applause and congratulations of heaven's high court, and of the millions who surround the throne of God! The greatest monarchs of this our earth dwindle into insignificancy and perfect annihilation before the face of Him who made them. "By me," says the Lord, "kings reign . . . by me princes rule, and the mighty decree justice" (Prov. viii, 15). All power is derived from, and maintained by Him, who, as the prophet Isaias expresses it, "hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and weighed the heavens in his palm; who hath poised with three fingers the bulk of the earth, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance" (*Ibid.* xl, 12). "All nations are before him, as if they had no being" (*Ibid.* 17), "the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are accounted as the smallest grain of a balance" (*Ibid.* 15). How, then, do men neglect, and even refuse to serve this mighty Lord? It should be a subject of thanksgiving and exultation, that He deigns

to number us in His retinue, that He will admit us in the quality of servants to attend upon Him, who, blessed in the enjoyment of infinite happiness, and uncontrolled dominion, needs not our paltry services and homage.

Yes, my brethren, with all the bustle and fancied consequence of mortals, with all the disputes and high concerns of men, as they are boastingly denominated by us, which spread hatred, and devastation, and death, from one end of the earth to the other, what are we? Poor, helpless creatures in the sight of God, who sees and knows that without Him we can not perform even the little exploits for which we value ourselves, nor strut in our imaginary greatness, for an hour or a single moment! Should we not then rejoice that we are *suffered* to serve the great God of heaven, whose wisdom, power and majesty surpass all that earth contains, or the united efforts of created imagination can conceive? Have we not cause to wonder and lament that the generality of mankind can be so insensible to genuine honor, as to be ambitious of transient earthly glory and renown, as to disregard the glory of immortality? That, for the sake of pleasing their worldly superior, they do not hesitate to offend the Master of earth and heaven? But if this first motive make not an impression on our hearts, if ambition warm us not to generous enterprise, and induce us not to aspire after the honor of serving so great a Lord, let justice, let duty prevail upon us. Whether we consider God as He is in Himself, or in regard to us, we are under the most pressing obligation of dedicating ourselves entirely to His service. If, by a supposition, absolutely impossible, we had received nothing at His hands, even then His infinite being and unbounded perfections would command our utmost endeavors; in homage to His supreme excellence and sovereign dominion, we should be in justice bound to prostrate ourselves before Him in acknowledgment of His infinite perfection. But when we consider Him also as our Creator, Preserver, Redeemer and Sanctified, can we, for a moment, hesitate to devote ourselves eternally to His service and love? Call to mind what is taught to you by the first principles of reason, as well as by the first elements of faith. Was it not the all-powerful hand of the Deity that from nothing produced this vast fabric of the universe, embellishing and providing it with all that it contains, for the use and benefit of man? Has He not gifted you with life and motion? Endowed you with a rational and reflecting soul, made after His own image, that you

might live, move and exist for His glory? Convinced of His wonderful goodness in giving existence, when you were nothing, and in choosing to place you in that state of existence which He had adorned with reason and understanding, proceed to that continual and, as it were, renewed creation, by which He every moment preserves that existence which He has bestowed upon you. We are under the same obligations to God for preserving our being, as if He created us every moment of our lives; since, without His preserving care, we should, any moment, relapse into our original nothingness. How base, therefore, what unnatural monsters of ingratitude must we be, if we can proceed from day to day as forgetful of God as if we owed our existence and preservation only to ourselves, and were indebted for nothing to almighty God. But still more enormous is our turpitude, when, conscious of all His goodness, we bid defiance to His power, and turn even His favors against Him by deadly sin. Yet how many does this world contain who seldom think, perhaps never with serious reflection, that the life which they are spending in criminal pursuits and sinful gratifications is in the hands of Him whom they are offending; that all that is in creation, and enjoys life, is animated and preserved by the goodness of God; that He feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the valley; that the thread of life is in His hand, and that every crime which sinners commit is a provocation to withdraw His hand, and let them fall into that abyss of wretchedness and despair which He has prepared for the impenitent. To convince you still more of the injustice of those who neglect God's service, let me call to your remembrance the inestimable benefit of your redemption, purchased by the Blood of His only Son, and that you are sanctified by His holy spirit. "You are bought with a great price," says St. Paul (I Cor. vi, 20), and to repay His mercies with ingratitude, to exasperate Him by sin, who died to efface the guilt of sin by His blood, is an atrocious injustice, an ingratitude which nothing can parallel! But to enumerate all His goodness to simple man is impossible; and if you feel not a sense of gratitude for His love you must have torn up by the root every generous sentiment of the heart. O! the ineffable goodness of Our God is a subject on which the grateful soul will love to dwell; it should be our delight to call to remembrance all His favors, and to pour out our whole souls in sweet effusions of thanksgiving and love for His innumerable acts of kindness to us!

But look to the reward He promises His servants, you will see that not only honor and duty require of us to serve God here below, but that our interest and our happiness here and hereafter depend on our attaching ourselves to Him with fidelity and affection. "Happy are thy men, and happy are thy servants who stand always before thee and hear thy wisdom," said the Queen of Saba to Solomon (II Paral. ix, 7), but thrice happy are they, my brethren, who stand always before the Lord in humble adoration, hearkening to His voice, and obeying His commands, "Happy is that people whose God is the Lord (Ps. cxliii, 15). They shall enjoy the sweets of conscious virtue free from the agonies which torment the guilty, and theirs shall be the recompense of joy eternal.

Now, my beloved friends, you admit, no doubt, the obligation under which man is placed of serving the God who made him, who has loaded him with endless favors, and who has prepared for His servants the joys of eternal glory as the reward of their fidelity. But have you ever considered the many motives which enforce that obligation? You may, indeed, have persuaded yourselves that you have discharged this obligation. But weigh well the greatness of His favors; estimate the return of gratitude, shall I say, or of justice? for all His goodness toward you, and then take a view of what you have done, of what you are still doing for God, and see whether it bear any proportion, with what reason and religion tell you ought to be done. What do you do for God? A few prayers are said to Him morning and night, a Mass occasionally heard, it may be, too, without respect or affection; while He is forgotten the rest of the day and, perhaps, His commands violated without concern. Is this to serve God as He desires; as He requires to be served? But I refer the examination to yourselves, and to a better opportunity; when drawn from the world to the silence of retirement you may interrogate your own hearts and attend to the answers conscience will make to the inquiry. But if you shall discover that hitherto you have wholly neglected to serve God, if you have injured Him in His gifts, making the advantages of health, riches, wit and beauty subservient to your passions; instrumental in offending Him yourselves, or in making others offend Him; or, if you have served Him by halves, submitting to a divided empire in your hearts, sometimes leaning to the side of virtue, but soon yielding to the corruption of nature, and seeking contentment in guilt—oh! now at least be moved to a regard for your own honor,

interest and happiness, for your eternal welfare; let every motive, both in time and eternity, every inducement which reason, religion or self-love can furnish, operate in withdrawing you from the galling servitude of this world, from the tyranny of vice, the wretchedness which must necessarily be experienced from the reproaches of a conscience, loaded and oppressed by sin, to a life of peace and true satisfaction, to a life spent in the service of almighty God, and hereafter to life and joy without end, to the sight and possession of God himself in the realms of everlasting bliss and glory.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON PREPARATION FOR DEATH

"Behold a dead man was carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow."—Luke vii, 12.

SYNOPSIS.—The Gospel suggests the subject of death. The coming of death is certain. Hence, nothing more important than preparation for death. A good life is the best preparation. The consequences of a bad death. So many neglect this duty entirely, others proscrastinate, overconfident of the mercy of God. Two motives stimulate to this preparation: (1) *love;* (2) *fear. Exhortation to lead a good Christian life, to part from all evil; to be ever watchful with loins girded and lamps burning.*

The first object presented to our view in the Gospel of this Sunday is a funeral. As Jesus was entering a small town of Galilee He met a great concourse of people; and behold they were bearing to the grave a young man, the *only son of his mother, and she was a widow.* O my brethren, can any spectacle be conceived more affecting. What must have been the feelings of this afflicted parent! She considers every fond expectation, every joy, for which she wished to live, blasted forever! From his earliest infancy she had watched over her darling offspring, had directed his steps through youth to manhood; in the fondness of her heart had delighted herself in the representation of a thousand pleasing incidents, and had hoped that after enjoying with him for a series of years prosperity and happiness, she would have yielded to the stroke of death, leaving her much loved son to transmit the name and virtues of his father to a numerous progeny. But, oh! how vain are all the calculations of human foresight! Death has bereft the aged mourner of every promised consolation; all her hopes are sunk in sudden disappointment, and he, who gave life to hope, is himself carried lifeless to the grave. But why is this melancholy scene exhibited to us? Because the sight of a young man taken off by death in the flower of his age must naturally bring to our minds that separation of the soul from the body which will cut us off from every concern of this world, divorce us from every pursuit, from every dear and tender connection.

The day will certainly come when these our bodies, now enjoying health and vigor, shall be conveyed cold and lifeless to the grave, be covered over deep with earth, and left to be consumed by worms. This event is seldom made a topic of conversation; it is banished from those circles formed to indulge in present gaiety; nor does it often enter a welcome guest into the minds of men, even in their closets; because it blunts the relish of earthly gratification. But, my brethren, in this sacred place, assembled as you are to prepare for another and a better world, to which death must give admittance, the subject can not be intrusive. At all events it is unquestionably the duty of God's minister to call the attention of the faithful to the consideration of death and its weighty consequences. The subject concerns me no less than yourselves; it is the concern of all. Let us then become sensible of its importance; let us convince ourselves that it is incumbent on us all to make preparation for death without delay, and let us inform ourselves respecting the means necessary for making preparation.

It is acknowledged by all that all must die, that the time of death is uncertain; and the Christian must own that it behoves all to prepare for that certain yet inevitable event, since it is not to be reasonably expected that *they* will die well who make no preparation for a good death. But the fatal, and the prevalent, error is this: they persuade themselves that, though an unprovided death will involve them in endless and irremediable wo, yet is there no occasion for hurry; that it will be more convenient or more easy at some future period; or, at farthest, it may be done when the approach of death is certain, and, therefore, must of necessity exclude every other concern. That this mode of reasoning should be adopted by the professed votaries of pleasure and present enjoyment is not so much to be wondered at; because they hardly think in sincere persuasion that this conversion will ever take place and really expect to die just as they have lived, indifferent to what may happen to them in a future state. But it is truly inconceivable that persons professing a wish and an intention to save their souls, and conforming to many of the external duties of religion, should be the dupes of so pernicious a delusion. Are we not justified in the apprehension that, while they adhere to the *external practices*, they are strangers to the *spirit* of religion? That in their hearts they love this world with supreme affection? That in reality they love nothing but this world, its pleasures and vanities? But whatever may serve as a pretext to

defer the preparation for death, still is it our interest, our highest interest, as well as duty, to attend to it with incessant care; and this, because to neglect this preparation is to expose ourselves to irretrievable ruin, as well as to deprive ourselves of the best consolation of which mortal life is susceptible. Is it a trifling consideration, I would ask, to run the risk of losing infinite goods, eternal goods, of losing our souls, and that forever? Nor merely to hazard the loss of happiness, but, together with the loss of endless, infinite happiness, to incur everlasting torment and misery? To the Christian it is incontestible that this is to expose ourselves to eternal pain and anguish, which a single moment may bring upon us, but from which, when once commenced, no efforts, no repentance, can free us, and which no length of time can terminate or diminish. Truth itself assures us that they who do not always "keep watch" shall be "surprised"; that they who do not stand "prepared, with their lamps in their hands," shall be "shut out" from the "nuptials"; that the "negligent servant" shall be "bound hand and foot," and "cast into outer darkness, where there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Were the loss of heaven and of the divine Presence forever the extent of the calamity, though the loss would then be beyond the understanding of man to estimate, yet the insensibility of the decided worldling would not excite so much surprise. He would only give a preference to guilty, base and sordid satisfactions, before the enjoyment of sovereign delight and supreme happiness; but to be content to die in sin, not only to be banished from the sight of all good, but to be condemned to *everlasting* torment, subject to the tyranny of an inexorable enemy, forever, forever without a ray of hope or a glimpse of future, distant alleviation of suffering, should make, one would imagine, even the most obstinate sinner stop in his career, would make the most desperate and determined shudder.

Would they but reflect, fear would prevail where love were ineffectual; self-interest would make impression where better considerations were without effect. But reflection is a horror to the wicked; as if they were resolved to shun whatever might be advantageous to them, they shut their eyes, their ears, their hearts and minds against whatever is calculated to produce sobriety of thought and serious consideration. Whenever reflection seems to press upon their minds, and urge it to a change of conduct, they fly to dissipation, to vanity, and sometimes to guilt, in order to free themselves from that which if indulged would produce serenity and joy;

would light up for them the torch of hope, and the fire of charity; would open to their view the sweet delights of heaven, and stimulate to virtuous exertion. But no; that conversation and that reading are studiously shunned which have a tendency to alarm them for their future safety, or rouse them to a concern for future happiness. Whatever can encourage their indifference, whatever can seem to excuse their insensiblity, is seized with avidity. Sometimes the father of lies emboldens their timidity with the hope of a long life and future repentance, when age shall have subdued their natural levity and cooled the ardor of passion; sometimes by the example of those who, having indulged in every vice, have, in the hour of death, shown signs of sorrow and afforded hopes of a true conversion. But O how weak a foundation is here for sinners! It is related (Euseb.) that the mortified St. Jerome, being near his end, uttered this alarming sentence: "Amongst thousands who have pursued a life of sin, scarcely is there one who obtains mercy by a death-bed repentance. This," continued the saint, "I am convinced of from certain experience"; and this, my brethren, our reason must demonstrate to us that the presumptuous temerity of those who expect to die well, without preparing for death during the time of life and health, seldom experiences that mercy which has been undervalued and despised. If, escaping the misfortune of a *sudden* death, by which thousands are snatched away, and which they are convinced would be their everlasting ruin; if escaping, too, the agonies of a *violent* sickness, which prevent many more thousands from attending to that which has been long neglected; if they even enjoy the leisure afforded by a lingering sickness; is there even then much ground for hope? Sin will never be forgiven except it be detested and forsaken in affection, as well as in effect, and the detestation of sin must be the gift of God; can it then be expected that on a sudden they can hate that which they could never prevail on themselves to hate before? That which they have long loved with the most ardent affection? Can they all at once love with their whole hearts, and above all things, that God whom they had never loved before, whom they had through life offended and despised? Infinite, no doubt, is the power of God; infinite is His mercy; but the change in question requires a particular exertion of His power, a miracle of His grace. "Say not," admonishes the author of Ecclus., v, 6, "say not the mercy of the Lord is great; he will have mercy on the multitude of my sins. For mercy and wrath

quickly come from him, and his wrath looketh upon sinners. Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day. For his wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance he will destroy thee." Let us then use our best endeavors, my brethren, that death finds us not unprepared; let us, convinced of the necessity of being on the watch, consider by what means we may make our death securely happy, and let us determine instantly to embrace those means.

Without entering into the particular duties of each station of life, which must all be faithfully discharged, in order to please almighty God, I wish only to inculcate one general maxim, which, if seriously attended to, will make that closing scene a source of consolation and happiness. "Blessed are those servants," says Our Saviour, "whom, when the Lord cometh, he shall find watching. Amen, I say to you he will place them over all that he possesseth" (Luke xii, 43). And again, "what I say to you I say to all; watch" (Mark xiii, 37). As a man lives, so, in general, is he found to die; and on the care which is taken to prepare for our departure out of life will depend our happiness or misery after death. Since we know that we are to leave this to settle in another country, does not wisdom, does not common understanding point out to us the propriety of making all possible provision for our future reception and establishment? To the good Christian nothing can happen on a sudden. If the Lord visit him in the hours of repose he is ready at midnight, as at noon, to accompany Him to the nuptial banquet; his lamp is in his hand nourished with oil; that is, his faith burns with purest brightness, fed by the oil of good works. If the just man be hastily carried off by death his soul shall, notwithstanding, rest in peace. "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" (Apoc. xiv, 13). But should the virtuous Christian possess the time to make an immediate preparation by the reception of the Sacraments, from whence his soul has been accustomed to receive the riches, and the plenty of God's grace, nothing will then be omitted that can help to purify his conscience and increase his security. He glows with desire to see his God, the joy of his heart, and the portion of his inheritance. Then will he enjoy the pleasing reflection that his life was spent in the service of his divine Master: that he preferred the glory and bliss of heaven before the fleeting pleasures of earth; every tribulation, every act of self-denial and penitential austerity, every struggle with the world, the devil, and his own corruption, that shall then be re-

membered, will afford hope and comfort. Their pain is past, the merit attached to them is remembered by God, their fruit is mercy, and their end peace. Cold and slothful Christians, suffer yourselves to be undeceived; know and value the consolation that is to be found in a good death, and be persuaded that the only security of your dying well depends on your living a good life. Resign those criminal pleasures, those fatal satisfactions which long custom has made so dear to you. Once they were not regarded, and then you were not only more independent, but even happier than you are at present, when you have increased the importunity of your passions by yielding to their demands. Renounce those dangerous, those sinful habits; you know them to be so to you, for often have they seduced you into sin; you have labored indeed to reconcile them to the dictates of conscience, and when that was not possible, you have run to them, and bidden conscience to be silent, but in vain; and you must still feel that in gratifying them you offend your God and prejudice your own souls. Cut off, eradicate, tear from your hearts whatever clings to them with guilty adhesion; grace will make the effort less difficult than you are apt to represent it to imagination; and though it were a thousand times more difficult than you suppose it, still ought you to despise difficulty, if, as you say, you desire to serve God, and effect your salvation. "Watch ye, therefore, because ye know not the day nor the hour" (Matt. xxv, 13).

Be ye then prepared, my brethren; instantly *set your house in order;* let your lives be regular and edifying; let not your neighbor be disedified by your uncharitable and unguarded conversation, your levity, your neglect of all that is holy. Neither let the pride of your exterior excite the disgust of your neighbor, nor the secret pride of your heart provoke the hatred of God. Let modesty regulate all your actions and chasten all your desires. Ask, and ask with fervor, with a desire of being heard, that God will give you a strong grace, that you may set about your conversion in earnest sincerity, that you may despise the world with all its follies, renounce forever the suggestions of self-love and concupiscence, and by a pious life insure the happiness of a virtuous death, with the reward which is promised to the good and faithful servants of our heavenly Lord and Master.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON THE VICE OF AVARICE

"There was a certain man before him that had the dropsy."—Luke xiv, 2.

SYNOPSIS.—The nature of the vice of avarice. Its prevalence—exists among all classes. The condemnation of it as expressed by Christ and the Scriptures. The evil consequences of this vice (1) *even in the natural order;* (2) *in the supernatural order; leads eventually to find impenitence. The poor particularly warned to be on their guard against it. The virtues opposed to this evil and their effects.*

In many respects the disorders of the body are figurative of those which afflict the soul, and in healing the former, our Redeemer has frequently instructed us what is to be done in order to be delivered from the latter. The vice of avarice is generally considered as represented by the dropsy, as it is a continual and insatiable thirst after the riches of the earth. Never are the desires of the covetous gratified, in whatever degree they possess the object of their riches. That the pagans, whose view was not extended to the glorious joys of heaven, should have sought with inordinate solicitude the riches of the earth, and grasp them with immoderate affection, is less surprising, but that the Christian to whom the light of revelation discloses the immortal regions of bliss and glory, with all the riches and grandeur of eternity, should be captivated with the meaner glitter of polished dust, which in a few short years he must be compelled to resign, is an infatuation which nothing but daily experience, and the clearest evidence could make credible. My brethren, extraordinary as this is, yet this base passion extensively prevails among poor and rich, young and old, in each sex, and in every condition of life. The young seek with eagerness the possession of wealth, hoping that wealth will make old age happy; the old embrace it with fond attachment, in proportion as they approach the term which must dispossess them of all they have; the rich, who often enjoy more than reason would require or extravagance can dissipate, still desire an increase; those who have sufficient to satisfy every reasonable want of nature, and who might spare something toward relieving the distresses of the truly indigent are ever longing

for more; while the poor, who can not indeed love money in effect, idolize it in affection, and consider it as the only means by which content and comfort are to be procured, as conferring wisdom, virtue, honor and happiness.

Yet is this vice generally overlooked; in the examination of our consciences it is either entirely passed over, or we acquit ourselves of all guilt in its regard; and hence in the tribunal of penance it is not thought of; though it is not to be doubted, that many who profess themselves Christians are miserably enslaved by it, and will suffer for it eternal wo hereafter. I wish to inspire you with horror and detestation of this secret, but deadly sin, by showing you that it is in direct opposition to the doctrines and precepts of our holy religion, pregnant with wretchedness and iniquity here, and productive of eternal wo hereafter.

This ignoble vice, my brethren, is either an irregular desire of possessing riches, or an immoderate attachment to them, when possessed. A just and regulated attention to the things of this world, without which life is not to be supported, be it well understood, is neither condemned by reason nor religion. But here is the specious subterfuge to which men resort; here is the cloak under which they conceal an inordinate love, or desire, of worldly wealth. A reasonable and moderate attention is not reprehensible; but it is no longer reasonable and moderate, it exceeds all just bounds, when, for the sake of money, unjust means are recurred to, or when money is sought with immoderate ardor, even though the means be just and lawful. The regard for money is no longer moderate, no longer lawful, when the attachment to that which has been acquired causes the possessor to be under an unceasing fear of losing it, or causes him to feel an overwhelming sorrow at the idea of resigning any part of it; much more when money is considered as the real source of happiness. We are all called upon to be poor, if not in effect, at least in affection; and if this poverty of spirit has been pronounced a real beatitude by the Son of God, strangely erroneous must be the opinion of those who live on in an affected ignorance of what heavenly truth and wisdom have taught; who conceive all those to be *miserable* whom he pronounces *blessed,* and those alone to be happy who wallow in boundless riches, and sensual delights; although he has declared such to be really miserable, and against them has pronounced his *wo* (Luke vi). To be convinced how abominable this vice must be in the sight of God, it is sufficient to

attend to what is said concerning it in Holy Writ, and to estimate it according to the ideas that have always been entertained of it by the wise and good. "There is not a more wicked thing," says the wise man (Eccles. x, 10), "than to love money, for such a one setteth even his own soul to sale." St. Paul calls covetousness "a serving of idols," and he declares the covetous man to be an "idolater" (Eph. v, 5; Colos. iii, 5). He declares riches to be a source of "temptation, a snare of the devil," the occasion of "many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition; for covetousness," he exclaims, "is the root of all evil" (I Tim. vi, 9). Our Lord has declared that riches are "deceitful" (Matt. xiii, 22), promising happiness, which they can not give; that they are "thorns," wounding the soul of the possessor (*Ibid.*); and, therefore, that "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xix, 24). To love this source of every evil must be a strange perversion of the understanding, an unaccountable preference of the shadow to the substance. Covetousness has always been considered as the meanest of the passions, the basest of propensities, because it is directed to the most despicable object, is a love of mere dust, to the prejudice of that love which is due to the Creator of all beautiful, beneficent, glorious and immortal. It is idolatry, in as much as the honor and affection due to God are given to mere creatures, to idols the most contemptible. It is a source of misery here no less than hereafter; nor is it in the power of language to represent, in faithful coloring, the agitations and agonies which torment the avaricious; to describe the fears, anxieties and solicitude which perpetually prey upon their minds. Neither by day nor by night do they enjoy repose; the sensations of gladness, serenity, and cheerful hope fly before suspicion and mistrust; and their whole confidence being placed on what is uncertain, they can never experience tranquillity. Yet to this unworthy object of idolatry do hundreds offer up, not the smoke of incense, nor the blood of animals, but their own immortal souls!

But do not acquit yourselves of all guilt, because you do not experience this anxiety and tormenting apprehension. It is, for the most part, the possessors of immense sums, who are capable of this continual alarm and apprehension. While they are ever vigilant to secure, and fearful to lose, what they have amassed, others, with profane desire, are panting after and adoring what is not, and what,

perhaps, may never be within their reach. This vice was frequently and severely condemned by Our Lord and by Him were the Scribes and Pharisees often reproved on account of it. The whole of the life of our blessed Saviour was in conformity with His doctrine. While He incessantly exhorted all to detach their minds and affections from earthly goods, while He energetically exclaimed, "Wo to you that are rich, for you have here your consolation" (Luke vi, 24), He himself possessed nothing. Say, then, my brethren, can you deserve the name of His disciples if your whole labor is directed to the acquiring of riches? Can you be said to be His followers if all the desires of your hearts are confined within the narrow circle of earthly satisfaction?

But what ought to increase the dread and horror of this vice in the breast of the Christian is the multitude of other vices which we discover in its train. St. Paul, that experienced teacher of the spiritual life, styles it the "root of all evils"; and he adds, "they who desire to become rich fall into temptation, and the snares of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires, which drown men in destruction and perdition" (I Tim. vi, 9). Seduced by a love of riches, he affirms, "that some have erred from the faith, and entangled themselves in many sorrows" (*Ibid.* 10); nothing exaggerated is here said by him—the example of the past and present times confirms what he has asserted. When men become enslaved to this odious vice nothing is refused that can gratify its demands; they become forgetful of God, unjust and unfeeling towards their fellow-men, often cruel toward themselves. The avaricious, and the slaves of mammon, are uniformly devoid of religion, their hearts are incapable of the glow of divine charity; they are without compassion for the distresses of others, a narrow selfishness confines and shackles all their affections, and while they seem to be actuated by self-interest in all they do, it is a false interest that imposes on them a small contemptible profit that seduces them to the prejudice of true and unbounded riches, for they sell their souls to the devil for all eternity, for a temporary enjoyment of a little glittering dust. Nay, where riches are not possessed the children of vanity feel a satisfaction in the appearance of possessing wealth, and will put themselves to much real and permanent inconvenience, that they may afford an occasional display of something which may induce their neighbor to estimate them somewhat higher than they could expect to be ranked from a knowledge of their real circumstances.

Thus it sometimes happens that avarice is at once penurious and extravagant; while its little artifices to impose upon others are generally seen through and ridiculed. "Better is he that laboreth," says the wise man, "and aboundeth in all things, than he that boasteth himself and wanteth bread" (Eccli. x, 30).

No passion leads so directly to final impenitence as the love of mammon; it increases with age and, like the disorder by which it is represented, its thirst becomes greater the more it is indulged. Other criminal affections generally grow old and feeble as men advance into years; but this seems rather to acquire strength as the strength of man decreases. This may arise from his delusion in first expecting happiness from wealth, and not finding it in that which he has acquired, he desires more, still hoping to be at last made happy by that which can never give contentment. Or it may be owing to the weakness of man, who, as he advances in years, seems to stand in greater need of support, and clings with fond attachment to that in which he has been accustomed to confide. He becomes blind and insensible to his folly and iniquity, and so far from lamenting his past wickedness he goes on, adding sin to sin, and, perhaps, when other unlawful propensities have died away this survives them all, and every wish of the heart is directed to this criminal object. Even in death, when the emptiness of all that passes away with time ought clearly to be evinced, even then the avaricious man thinks with fondness on the base idol of his soul, would wish to carry it with him into the other world, dies with the same sentiments with which he has lived, and incurs the same sentence which is passed on the rich man mentioned in St. Luke, "He died and was buried in hell" (xvi, 22). Then he will find how appropriate are the words of St. James, "Go now, ye rich, weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon you, your riches corrupted and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver rusted, and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you, and it shall eat your flesh like fire. You have stored up to yourselves wrath against the last day" (v, 1).

My brethren, I know that all that can be urged by reason and religion, the view of the present shifting scene, and the representation of eternal ages, has little effect on the inconsiderate worldling. Even our blessed Lord when He had exhorted His hearers to shun this vice which is the damnation of thousands, was only ridiculed and despised by them. "The Pharisees," says the Evangelist, who

were covetous, "heard all these things, and they derided him" (Luke xvi, 14). Many may persuade themselves that they are not concerned in what has been said; they indeed can not consider themselves among the rich, they may wish they could. But let them and all remember that the vice against which these wos are denounced consists not in the possession of riches, but the love of them; that the poor may be guilty as well as the rich, and sometimes more so in the eyes of God.

It is possible, and often it is the case, to be poor in effect and rich in affection; as it is also possible, by the grace of God, to be poor in affection, even in the midst of riches. Avarice exists and reigns in every condition of life. The possessor of thousands may be guilty, and they of smaller fortunes; nay, even with a small pittance, avarice may be indulged, and covetousness, which is an inordinate desire, or love of wealth, may be indulged in rags. Those who make use of what Providence has given them purely to serve themselves, who plan, project and economize, but all with a view to their own ease and enjoyment; and who, if they wish for more, have no object but self-gratification, should look well to the state of their interior; examine their hearts and see whether they be wholly free from this inordinate vice; whether self-love does not prevail over the love of God, and their duty to their neighbor.

The poor, too, should carefully observe the tendency of their hearts, for if they are forever desiring that which they are probably never destined to attain, if they inordinately cling to that little which Providence has dispensed to them, and when they look with envy and regret on those who enjoy a greater affluence, the object of their homage is less real while their guilt is not less certain. These are ever striving with vain solicitude to increase their little stock, and are frequently ready to effect their purpose by means which the laws of God and His Church condemn. The few festivals which occur in the course of the year are disregarded, as if God, from whom all success must be derived, would prosper their endeavors, while His service is neglected; and even the Sundays, when open traffic is suspended, are devoted to plans and calculations by which money may be acquired. But "blessed are the poor in spirit," whether they enjoy the riches of the earth and use them according to the designs of heaven, which bestows them, or be placed by Providence at a distance from wealth, and the numerous dangers to salvation which accompany it. Remember,

my brethren, that riches and poverty, terrestrial success and terrestrial adversity come from God; while content of mind, and calm acquiescence in His appointments, can alone make any situation happy. Seek not then to "treasure up to yourselves treasures upon the earth," which can not be long enjoyed, and which never confer happiness, exposed as they are to the continual risk of loss and plunder, but "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither rust nor moth consumeth, and where thieves break not in and steal" (Matt. vi, 20); treasures which shall never perish or decay.

By the practise of humility, patience and resignation; by works of benevolence and charity to Christ's suffering and indigent brethren, you will secure a reward from Him, you will accumulate true riches, which neither malice nor accident can assail, nor revolutions scatter, nor time demolish. Then shall the days of your mortal life flow on in sweet serenity, brightened by the glorious prospect ever open before you, and daily drawing nearer to your view; half the sorrows of this world will be dispelled, and contentment and peace will be your portion here, and "hereafter yours shall be the kingdom of heaven."

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON THE LOVE OF GOD

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind."—Matt. xxxii, 37.

SYNOPSIS.—The importance and nature of the command to love God. The necessity of loving God. Our hearts made for Him. The facility of observance of this command. The numerous advantages, for this world and the world to come, to be obtained by the observance of this great law of God. Many constantly ignore and despise this law. The foolishness of their action; its sad consequences. Exhortation, to faithfully observe the law.

Behold, my brethren, the first and greatest of God's commandments, which all are required to fulfil, and which, fully complied with in all its parts, relations, and bearings, is discharge of the whole of our duty. Nothing can be more just than this law of God, whether we consider Him as the Sovereign Lord of the universe, exercising supreme dominion over His subject creatures, or as the parent, preserver, protector of all, claiming our love in return for His, the Being of infinite goodness and excellence. Oh, then, what can hinder man from complying with a precept so clearly and indispensably imposed upon all, so unquestionably connected with the interest and happiness of all, both in time and through eternity! Is it that you see not benefits that accrue to those who love the Lord with all the powers of their souls? Little have you meditated on the author of all good, if you entertain a notion so erroneous. Or is it that you imagine the precept as impossible, or exceedingly difficult? If you have hitherto unfortunately been imposed upon by an error, the most dangerous that can deceive you, suffer yourselves this day to be undeceived. May I be enabled by the grace of God to convince you that it is easy and sweet to love the God of loveliness, and that ineffable advantages, eternal bliss and glory, are the certain consequences of loving him! At the same time may you experience a heartfelt sorrow that so few among deluded mortals bestow their affections upon the Source of all greatness and goodness!

These two propositions I shall endeavor to establish: that the precept of the love of God is easy to be observed, as well as in-

finitely beneficial in the observance; and, at the same time, that the precept of loving God with our whole heart, our whole soul, and whole mind, is, alas! duly observed by very few.

If we place any reliance on the declarations of God himself, we shall be convinced that what He requires of us is not a work of difficulty exceeding our strength or ability; He assures us that what He commands is not impracticable. "This commandment that I command thee this day is not above thee, nor far from thee. Nor is it in heaven, that thou shouldst say, which of us can go up to heaven to bring it to us, and we may hear and fulfil it in work? Nor is it beyond the sea, that thou mayest excuse thyself and say which of us can cross the sea and bring it unto us, that we may hear and do that which is commanded? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it" (Deut. xxx, 11).

Of this you will be strongly convinced, if you attentively consider the relation which our hearts bear to God, and the helps which He offers us, that we may love Him. Our hearts were made by Him and made to love Him; God is of Himself the only object capable of satisfying our affections and desires, and the graces, which He bestows upon us, to acquit ourselves of the obligation of loving Him above all things, will, if corresponded with, make every difficulty which has been the consequence either of the fall of our first parents, or, of our own malice, yield to their powerful efficacy. Yes, my brethren, the heart of man, notwithstanding the loss it has sustained by our fall from original innocence in the state of pure nature, is still naturally attracted to what is good. Such is the natural propensity of the heart of man to that which the understanding represents to it as good, that it is carried powerfully toward it as soon as it perceives it. This made St. Augustine say, "The life of the heart is love; it is wholly impossible that the heart can exist without love." The mind is made for reflection: the function of the memory is to recall the past, but the duty of the will is to love. This is its peculiar office, its employment and delight. Now, the more excellent the object the more it claims our love; and the stronger is our attachment to any object in proportion as we discover it to possess merit or desert. This is discernible in our affections for terrestrial objects; for, if carried away by a passion for pleasure, riches, beauty or any earthly excellence, the more ardent is our affection for the object in proportion as we discern in it more of

that excellence which has excited our regard. This being admitted, which can not be called in question, I maintain that in our hearts is found a natural and continual inclination toward God as the only object which can fully and entirely satisfy them. In one word, our hearts were created for a *sovereign* good; nothing less than infinite loveliness can fill the capacity of our hearts, and never can they enjoy tranquillity and content but when satiated with unbounded excellence and perfection. We are created in God's image; nothing created can satisfy us, for in God alone we find that which is capable of making us completely happy. *Out of* Him we may admire and love, but something will still be found deficient, since all creatures, being essentially limited, are of consequence imperfect; but when we are united to God by the pure bond of divine charity, when we cling to Him as to the source of all good, the end and aim of our being, we then find a calm repose and soothing quiescence; a peace which the world can neither give nor take away. O eternal Being, the Creator and Preserver of all, from whom necessarily emanates all that is great or admirable in heaven or on earth, how shall temporal beauty captivate our hearts and seduce them from thee! We know that in giving the preference to anything created we renounce thy favor and resign superior worth and excellence: Oh, never let us be so insensible as to surrender our hopes of possessing thee, for the sake of any inferior enjoyment! Where can be the difficulty in loving God? Does it originate in Him? No; for He is infinitely amiable. Nor in the constitution of our hearts, for they are formed to love that which is lovely. It is in our disordered affections, our irregular passions, which draw us to created objects: but the power of grace, if not rejected or abused, is superior to the force of passion, and will give us an easy victory.

If you require a motive, my brethren, to concur in the will of your God, and to employ His graces, think of the benefits that will accrue to you, both in time and through eternity, from giving your affections to your true and everlasting Lover. To enumerate them all, and to display them in their native form, is not in the power of man; to insist upon *some* of them, and to represent them in imperfect coloring, would require a long discourse. Let them be the subject of your frequent meditation. The subject will be found pleasing, and none can be more interesting. If you desire riches, seek *true* riches, and you will find them in God, for all good things come with Him. No sooner do we love God with our whole hearts than we are

truly rich, however lowly our situation; for he alone is rich, who is contented; as, on the contrary, if the love of God reign not in our hearts, however great and wealthy we may be, according to the notions of the world, we are miserable and poor, distracted by a thousand cares, agitated by innumerable distressing concerns, the victims of unruly passions, and the sport of human accidents. True honor, sincere enjoyment, real riches and genuine happiness are the fruits of charity, and by loving God we ensure to ourselves His love, and, according to the promise of Jesus Christ, an intimate union with the Deity. "He that loveth me shall be loved by my Father, and I will manifest myself to him" (John xiv, 21), "and we will come to him, and will take our abode with him" (*Ibid.* 23).

But it is not here on earth that the greatness of God and His liberality are displayed in all their excellence to those who love Him and keep His commandments. It is in heaven, the seat of His glory, that He will give himself without reserve or measure, or end, to His faithful lovers and followers. For "the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him" (I Cor. ii, 9). Who, then, would imagine that the love of God reigned not in the heart of every living creature? Yet we are compelled to acknowledge that this love, the true love of God, is extremely rare among men, even among those who admit the necessity, the facility and the infinite advantage of loving Him.

Mankind in general profess to love God, but their conduct too generally contradicts their professions. To love God is to prefer Him to everything; to be disposed to suffer everything, to lose everything, to resign even life, rather than to lose His grace. To love God is, on all occasions, to seek and promote His glory; consequently to be sensibly hurt at every outrage committed against Him; and, on our own part, to labor in His service, to be in all things submissive to the appointments of His providence, and to endeavor that He be served by all. To love God is to think often on Him, to refer all our most indifferent actions to Him, and to desire a union with him; in fine, to love God is to give ourselves and all that we have to Him; and, for His sake, to love all mankind as we love ourselves, wishing to all and to each the same happiness that we wish ourselves. Now, my brethren, is it not to be greatly feared that very few indeed are thus disposed toward God and their neighbor? Do not they resign the grace and friendship of God on the

most trifling considerations? For a paltry interest, for the sake of a few feet of ground, for a vain point of honor, for an unworthy gratification? This is not to prefer God to all things! Who are animated with a zeal for God's honor? While the actions and conversation of those around us are disgraceful to the religion we profess, and injurious to God, the author of true religion, where are they who stand forward in defense of truth and virtue? Are we attacked, or is the character of a friend assaulted, we display our zeal; but the injuries that are offered to the God whom we profess to love "above all things," we may witness with calm indifference. O this is not to love God with a love of preference; this is not to love Him even as we love ourselves. Where shall we find the Christian whose chief delight is to think on God; who suffers with gladness what God inflicts upon him; and whose aim in all things is the accomplishment of God's will, and the promotion of His glory? It is thus we should be affected if the love of God reigned in our hearts paramount to every other affection.

As to the love of our neighbor as of ourselves, which St. John represents as the criterion by which we are to determine whether we love God above all things, how few are there who do not entertain a dislike for *some* of their fellow-creatures? Who do not shun them from a guilty antipathy, and instead of wishing them the same good they wish themselves, on the contrary, are grieved to hear of their prosperity, and take a secret satisfaction in any misfortune that befalls them?

Instead of the love of God we have continual proofs of the love which persons bear to vanity and luxury in all its branches, to sensuality and themselves; and it is from their actions that their hearts are to be known, not from their professions. Tell me not, says St. John Chrysostom, that you love God, and love Him above yourselves and all things. These are mere words, but prove them by your works, demonstrate that you love Him by your actions. If you love Him above your own *souls,* show that you love Him better than your *money,* and I will believe you. Desist from that sinful habit which you indulge, in defiance of His command, and in direct opposition to the love of Him, and then say you love God above all things. But as long as you refuse to give up a paltry interest, a base pleasure, a proud competition, a sinful resentment, or whatever He abhors, your passions are dearer to you than your duty, you love yourselves better than you love your God.

Since then it can not be denied that numbers deceive themselves, while they imagine they fulfil this great commandment, let it be your care, my brethren, to guard against so fatal a delusion. Sound your hearts, and if you discover any sordid love, any illicit affection, any forbidden attachment, implore the God of mercy and love that He will send down upon them the fire of divine charity; that in the midst of them He will enkindle the sacred flame that may diffuse itself through every part, and consume whatever belongs not to Him. Whom or what should we desire to love but Him, from whom we have received all things? For this we were made, and He alone can fill the capacity of our longing hearts, which, if not occupied by Him, present a dreary waste, a gloomy void. In vain will you seek content or happiness, from any earthly object; every inferior pleasure and meaner gratification carries with it an inseparable alloy of bitterness. May we each of us be enabled to say with confidence, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee" (John, *ult.* 17); and glowing with this pure affection for the God of purity, sanctity and love, may we persevere in His grace till death, and be admitted to the joys of His presence for everlasting ages.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON RASH JUDGMENT.

"Jesus seeing their thoughts, said, Why do you think evil in your hearts?" —Matt. ix, 4.

SYNOPSIS.—The power used demonstrates the divine character of the Saviour. Rash judgment: its meaning; its prevalence; its folly. Scripture strong against this evil: it is founded on malice or envy, pride and self-interest. It is a violation of charity, justice and the rights of God. Its baneful effects (1) on our neighbor, (2) on ourselves. The condemnation of the sinner. Exhortation to be rid of such a disastrous passion.

We discover, my brethren, in the present Gospel, an evident proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ. While He evinces His heavenly mission by the miracle which He performs, He demonstrates the divinity of His character by absolving from sin by His own power and authority, which God alone can do, and by His penetrating into the hidden thoughts of His hearers, which are known to God only. He had said to the sick man, "Son, thy sins are forgiven thee"; He proves that He possesses this power of forgiving sins by restoring to him the use of his limbs, and by the exertion of a power which must be derived from heaven. He confounds the secret rash judgments of the Scribes, who in their hearts accused and condemned Him of blasphemy. Let us rejoice that Our Saviour has afforded such powerful evidence in support of our faith; let us adore Him as God and man; let us profit by what He teaches us; let us learn from the answer which He made to those who thought evil of Him, who was pure from all guilt and the God of purity, never to form a rash judgment to the prejudice of our neighbor, but to interpret all His actions as favorably as it is in our power, and even when the exterior presents nothing favorable to our view, to hope that a virtuous, though possibly erroneous, *intention* may protect him from sin in the sight of God. Above all, let us learn never to pass sentence of condemnation upon our neighbor, for judgment is the Lord's.

Against this sin of rash judgment and its pernicious consequences, so common among mankind, I intend to direct my present discourse;

hoping to convince you that rash judgment passed upon the conduct of our neighbor is contrary to the rights and authority of God, and opposite to Christian charity. Hence, it will necessarily follow that this offence, in which men so frequently indulge without scruple or remorse, is a grievous violation of morality, and ruinous to man's salvation.

By rash judgment is understood the condemnation of our neighbor's actions or intentions, upon light or insufficient grounds. I wish not to excite scruples in the breasts of the timorous, as if I included every involuntary thought, or uncherished suspicion to the prejudice of our neighbor, which may rush upon the imagination, and from which the just are not secure; but I mean every voluntary thought, every suspicion entertained with full deliberation, every judgment formed with knowledge and consent to the injury of our neighbor's virtue and character. This is, in the first place, an injury done to God, who has expressly forbidden it in many passages of Sacred Writ. In Levit., xix 15, He says, "Thou shalt not do that which is unjust nor judge unjustly." Our Saviour Christ Jesus has confirmed the same, when He says, "Judge not, that ye may not be judged" (Matt. vii, 1). "Judge not and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned" (Luke vi, 37). "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art, that judgest," says St. Paul (Rom. ii, 1); "for wherein thou judgest another thou condemnest thyself." "He that judgeth his brother," says the Apostle St. James (iv, 2), "judgeth the law. But if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one lawgiver and judge, that is able to destroy and deliver. But who art thou that judgest thy neighbor?" To judge, then, is to invade the authority and rights of the Deity, and to violate His express command. Nor is it less a violation of Christian fraternal charity, an injustice done to our neighbor. "Charity thinketh no evil, rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth with the truth" (I Cor. xiii, 5). It would rather be deceived, by inclining to a favorable construction, than offend God and hurt its neighbor by too much severity in forming an opinion. Charity directs us to give to others the same treatment which we would wish to receive ourselves: would we then desire, in similar circumstances, that our neighbor should condemn us? Oh, no; we are sufficiently tender of ourselves; and while we are condemning others, upon the slightest grounds, we are suspicious that our actions may be scrutinized in the same manner, and

we reprobate the injustice, the cruelty of such conduct, when it concerns ourselves. We have doubtless a claim to the candor of our neighbor, but the right is reciprocal, and he has the same claim upon us; and as long as he commits no action criminal in itself, we are not authorized to condemn him upon surmise and conjecture. How would you cry out, if, upon suspicion, *you* were judged and condemned? Let your conduct be regulated by the laws of equity, and you will spare your neighbor; where, on many occasions, you condemn him, upon the same principles, which in similar circumstances would entitle you to mercy. Often is your fellow-creature and fellow-Christian summoned to the tribunal of your judgment upon the most trivial grounds, upon the slightest conjectures, or upon reports, which often originate in envy, malice or unprincipled wantonness; you are not solicitous to find arguments to render report or conjecture improbable, but every effort is made to turn arguments against him, and a secret satisfaction is enjoyed in pronouncing him guilty in a court, where witness, judge and jury are all combined against him. Frequently you impute a bad intention to a doubtful action, which might have, with equal probability, proceeded from a laudable motive; in short, prejudice, dislike, ill-humor, interest, or some baneful passion influences the judgment of the world, and ruins the good fame of innocence. If it proceed no further than your own heart, it inflames aversion, and a species of malice; but, unfortunately, from rash judgment are produced consequences widely diffused, and most calamitous in their nature.

St. Francis de Sales, in his excellent "Introduction to a Devout Life," says that from rash judgments are generated disquietude of mind, a contempt for our neighbor, a malignant pride which turns from contemplating the faults, real or imagined, of others, to a self-complacent view of our own imaginary qualities. This is the certain effect of rash judgment; for imagine not that in the aversion you feel for the errors of your brother in Christ you are actuated by a pure love of God and zeal for virtue. It is yourselves you are endeavoring to raise in your own estimation, by sinking the merit of another, forming an immediate comparison between him and yourselves —giving, as it is natural to expect, the superiority to yourselves, and concluding, like the proud Pharisee, that you are not like other men, but in all your conduct circumspect, exemplary, and edifying. This is the view which prompts to that severe criticism, which man exercises upon his fellow-man, his fellow-servants; from hence result the other

numberless bad effects of rash judgment; from this empoisoned source flow domestic broils, family aversions, jealousies between man and wife, and the thousand fatal evils which deluge civil society. For, not content with exercising pride and malice within their own bosoms, with fostering envy, and rancorous hate in their own hearts, the unhappy victims of this vice proceed to disseminate the mischiefs they have conceived, as far as their credit and influence extend. The injurious report is spread abroad, blown by the breath of detraction; in every conversation murder is committed—the murder by the tongue! for under its repeated stabs reputation expires. Oh! ill-fated innocence! unsuspecting simplicity! while with easy heart and careless step thou proceedest on thy way, how often art thou abused, ruined by that merciless fiend, from mere envy of thy harmless felicity! The faults that are so often committed in conversation, by detraction and calumny, spring from those unfounded judgments that are formed in secret to the loss of charity, and to the ruin of innumerable souls.

But the most dreadful of all the effects which this vice produces, is the danger of being condemned without mercy at that tribunal where the doom is irrevocable. The sentence has already been notified to us by Him who is to come to judge the living and the dead. "In what judgment you shall have judged, you shall be judged; and with what measure you shall have measured, it shall be again measured unto you" (Matt. vii, 2). You have condemned your neighbor, assuming to yourself the character and office of judge, and thus have you furnished the universal Judge of mankind with matter for *your* condemnation. By your merciless conduct toward your fellow-servant, passing sentence upon him for faults which were perhaps never committed, or for which he is to answer only before God, you have brought upon yourselves the just anger of God. "Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth" (Rom. xiv, 4). And "judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy" (Jas. ii, 13). What would be our comfort, my brethren, if, stretched on the bed of sickness, and menaced with approaching death, we could assure ourselves that we had never taken into our hands the wisdom and power of God, never passed sentence upon our neighbor in prejudice to charity. How full of hope and humble confidence might we then go to appear before the tribunal of Jesus Christ, trusting that, having always shown, we should find mercy.

It is the spiritual sins, my brethren, pride, envy, rash judgment, etc., that are the most hateful in the sight of God, and give birth to the greatest variety of other vices, while they are too often the least attended to of any. Sins of anger, lust and fraud are not so easily overlooked, yet these others are not regarded. But do you, I beseech you, weigh well their enormity, and as to the sin of rash judgment, banish it from your hearts, which should be the receptacles of brotherly love; and wage eternal war against it, if you value the love of God, if you have a regard for His honor, a sense of your duty, or a desire of your salvation. Pluck up from the soil of your souls the root of this evil, which is *pride*. In the second place, learn to judge yourselves with severity, studiously dispose to discover your own failings, and to correct them. Turn away your eyes and thoughts from the conduct of your neighbor, unless charity, pure unaffected charity, and the duty of your situation require you to watch over others, as responsible for their behavior. Be not prompt to condemn, but suspend your judgment, and, if possible, judge not at all. Give to the actions of others the best motive of which they are susceptible, thus excusing the intention, where you can not approve the work: suppose it was the effect of ignorance, says St. Bernard, surprise or accident. The rule laid down by the amiable Bishop of Geneva is worthy his great charity. If an action, says he, could wear a hundred different aspects, we should view it on that which best becomes it. Beg of God that he will increase within you the love of Him, and of your neighbor; ask His forgiveness for all past offences in this way; renounce forever, from this moment, every disadvantageous opinion you may have conceived of any one; entertain for every fellow-creature, every brother in Christ a sincere and Christian affection, or, at least, if you must judge, have the heart of an equitable and mild judge. This will be the best means of finding mercy from the Sovereign Judge, on whose mercy you must rest your hopes of finding forgiveness, grace and salvation.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON THE TORMENTS OF HELL

"Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."—Matt. xxii, 13.

SYNOPSIS.—The importance of the parable—the meaning of its various parts. The attitude of the Jews—their punishment. Our gratitude for the invitation to the banquet. Confession of Catholicity not sufficient for salvation; we must wear the garment of grace. Sin more terrible in a Christian than in an infidel; its punishment more severe. Meditation on hell dreadful but salutary. Contrast between the evils of this world and the next. Means to acquire or preserve this essential state of grace. Sad negligence of so many. Exhortation to frequent meditation and to patient bearing of crosses in reparation for past sin.

No parable among the many which Our Lord spoke to the multitude, and to His disciples, is more terrible, none more calculated to make a salutary impression upor our hearts, than that which the Church has judged proper to propose to us this day. But it behooves us to attend to the signification of the parable, to consider what is represented to us by this king, this wedding, these guests. What is meant by this particular invitation, which, being disregarded by the special friends of the king, is extended to every description of people, without regard to birth, rank or external recommendation? What is figured by the wedding garment, and the rigorous punishment inflicted on the man who had not this garment?

My brethren, the king is *God himself,* the King of kings; who, having prepared in His court of heaven an eternal feast for His creatures, sent His only begotten Son upon the earth to make a holy alliance with men. His divine Son, having been first announced to the Jewish people by their prophets, came to them Himself in person, clothed in the nature of man, like unto themselves: the children of Israel, His chosen people, He invites to be gathered together, and to form His Church to acknowledge Him for the envoy of God, the Redeemer of the world, the first and the head of the elect. But instead of acknowledging His mission, they treat Him with the lowest indignities, and put Him to death, nailing Him to a

cross. What is the consequence of this unparalleled guilt? Their temple is destroyed, their city leveled with the ground, themselves dispersed, condemned to the quarries, led into captivity, sold like beasts of burden, and put to death in the most shocking and insulting manner, and their posterities, even to this day, bearing the marks of God's indignation; while another people is chosen to compose His Church, and partake of His banquet; and you, my friends, are admitted to that signal happiness. This should be to you a subject of unceasing gratitude and joy. But one consideration yet remains, which is that it is not sufficient to be members of the Church of Christ, but, to be admitted and acknowledged at His heavenly feast, the nuptial garment must distinguish us, sanctifying grace must adorn our souls, and whoever, entering into eternal life and the presence of the great king, shall be devoid of this grace, will experience the sentence of the Gospel in all its rigor. "Bind his hands," etc. Alarming sentence, big with calamity and wo, with pains and horror, that will never end! But no tongue can describe the pains and misery, the unavailing rage and fury, the never-ceasing reproaches and black despair of the reprobate; faith informs and convinces you that never-ending torments in hell are the certain lot of the unrepenting sinner, and common sense and common prudence impel us to the adoption of every precaution which may serve to secure us from such accumulated wretchedness. Let us, this day, consider by what measures we may escape the dreadful sentence of eternal reprobation, be received at the nuptials of the Son of God, and in the feast of glory, prepared for His elect, be admitted to a place at His table.

It is an acknowledged truth, that, all other circumstances supposed equal, the same sin is more grievous in the Christian than in the infidel; that the enormity of the offence is proportioned to the dignity and sanctity of the state in which he is placed who commits it, according to the light which he has received, and the ingratitude with which he is chargeable. As the Christian stands distinguished by the character of Baptism, so shall he be more degraded in hell, if condemned to that abyss of misery: as he has received a more abundant overflow of heavenly graces, he shall have a more lively sense of the eternal loss of his neglected benefactor; as he now sins with a malice more deliberate, so will he more acutely suffer the fire that shall never be extinguished, and the gnawing worm of a self-convicted conscience that will never die. "It shall be more tolerable

for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment, than for you. And thou . . . who art exalted unto heaven, shall be thrust down to the deepest hell" (Luke x, 15). Now, my beloved friends, it is a maxim generally admitted that in proportion as the evil to be apprehended is great and imminent, our caution and exertion ought to increase. When the dread of a mortal contagion raging on every side alarms us what do not men do to exclude infection and secure their lives? What pains are taken to guard against the evils incident to human life, and ending with it? We tremble at the approach and the idea of temporal calamities. Should not the horrors of eternal damnation, of never-ending, never-intermitting torments which threaten the guilty Christian, cause us to take every precaution, not only to make it probable that we shall escape the extreme of wo, but to make our election sure? Is it not inconceivable that Christians, believing themselves to be concerned in an affair of such consequence, in which, if we once fail, our failure is irretrievable, should, in apparent indifference and trifling away life, leave the affair of salvation, of happiness, or misery for eternity, as it were to itself, to take its chance; when they know, too, that negligence and indifference are sufficient to determine the chance against them, and consign them to certain misery? Oh! were we truly wise, these should be our sentiments: Penetrated with a sincere conviction of the superiority of eternal joys over terrestrial pleasures, of eternal torments over terrestrial sufferings; all the pains of this life, with all its collective humiliations and imaginable sorrows, should appear light and inconsiderable both as to intensity and duration; and whatever might be our situation here, we should bear it with magnanimity, knowing that time will put an end to earthly pain and sorrow. We know that God requires from us nothing above our strength, and that by His assistance we may ensure to ourselves a state of future felicity. Do you really desire to possess this felicity, my friends? Preserve in your souls with careful vigilance the grace of God, if you are happy enough to enjoy it; if you have reason to fear that you are not in the state of grace and friendship with Him, use, without delay, the means of reconciliation; be ever prepared to meet the summons of your sovereign Lord; and constantly bear in mind the rewards prepared for the just, and the punishments reserved for the wicked. These are the means by which we may procure admission and gracious reception at the wedding feast of our great King.

Nothing is more indispensably necessary for escaping the just judgment of God and eternal evils than the state of grace; if we are so unfortunate as to be deprived of this, whatever good works we may seem to perform, we have but the exterior of virtue, and live in a state of reprobation. If you be so happy as to possess a well-grounded hope that you enjoy the grace and friendship of God, learn to know your happiness, and labor to preserve it. This is a treasure, to purchase which we should sacrifice every advantage; for compared with this every advantage is contemptible. Yet, while we find many professing themselves to be anxious to secure their eternal felicity, they resign this essential means of obtaining it for the most paltry considerations, for a momentary satisfaction, which leaves nothing behind it, save only anxiety and remorse; for a dishonest gain, which can never be possessed with real peace of mind, and must, sooner or later, be resigned if conscience is ever to be attended to, or must, at least, be torn away by death. Often is this invaluable treasure lost, even against inclination from a base fear, and from a shame to be virtuous; and, oh! how often do men make up their minds to pass weeks, months, and years without this robe of innocence, this nuptial garment, by passing weeks, months, and years in mortal sin!

Let the second means which I mentioned rouse the sinner from indifference to such a state of wretchedness. Think, unhappy mortal, on the torments that await the impenitent; let not the name of that place of suffering, the name of hell, be used without causing you to shudder at the thought of having deserved to be plunged into it. If you intend ever to throw yourself at the feet of your offended Sovereign, let this thought occupy your mind, when you rise from bed, and when you lie down to rest. Let it often press upon your mind, and it will at length find its way to your heart. Say to yourself, deluded sinner: Behold my helpless state, without hope or comfort, a single step separates me from death; in one instant may the blow be struck, when, foul with iniquity, I must infallibly be plunged into an abyss of wo. There in chains of fire, in a dungeon of obscurity, with every torment which my baseness has merited, I must forever groan in agonies of despair, bearing throughout eternity the load of a sinful conscience, the punishment of a sinful life, and in language, which so many already employ, and which the Gospel puts into the mouth of the guilty rich man, cry out, I suffer, I burn, *I am tormented in this flame!* Oh! were the God

of all power from that region of outer darkness where no order but everlasting horror dwelleth to place here before you some unhappy sufferer, bearing within and without him those indescribable and inconceivable tortures which afflict the sentenced sinner, what impressions would not his presence make upon you! Would you not then prostrate yourselves before your God, and with a thousand, thousand promises and prostrations implore His pardon and invoke His mercy? But even then would your promises be sincere? Would they not die away when the object of terror was removed? Have you not the strongest assurances of unerring faith to convince you that the miseries of the damned are such as neither eye hath seen, etc.? Have you not Moses and the prophets? Hear ye them. The authority of God's declaration is incontestible; and if sinners believe not upon the testimony of God's unerring word, "neither would they believe if one should rise from the dead" (Luke xvi).

My beloved friends, you profess yourselves believers of what God has revealed to you; the enormity of sin, the severity and eternity of its punishment; let this fundamental article of your religion be not a mere external tenet; the profession of your lips, which, taught to you in infancy, has by frequency of repetition lost its signification; but meditate frequently upon the means of escaping that state of misery from which no subsequent repentance can deliver; in which there can be no repentance. No Christian, says a doctor of the Church, will fall into hell who thinks often and well upon that place of punishment; while those who have refused to think upon it during life will doubtless be precipitated into it after death.

With these dread caverns opened to your imagination, ask yourselves what particular faults of which you are conscious are most calculated to draw upon you God's anger, what particular passion predominates within you; for you will, if sincere in your search, discover some habit, vice or inclination which holds superior sway and influence, and which you are consequently called upon to oppose with peculiar industry and perseverance, if you wish to escape its tyranny. To the fire of passion oppose the fire of hell; let every inordinate desire, every irregular affection be cast into those eternal flames; and may your souls be purified from every defilement that can displease the sight of God. Let every little cross and trial, every pain and humiliation, lose its unpleasantness in the contemplation of the incomparably greater sufferings reserved for sin hereafter; and in imitation of a devout servant of God, a patient,

willing, and joyful sufferer, let God, and *God only,* be the object of your longing desires; His will the rule of your conduct. And may His happy vision in the life to come reward your perseverance; may you be admitted happy guests at His eternal feast, and partake in the glory of the elect for all eternity.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON THE EFFECTS OF SCANDAL

"See that you walk circumspectly, not as unwise, but as wise."—Eph. v, 15.

SYNOPSIS.—Analysis of Epistle of St. Paul. Particular advice to walk circumspectly. Christ's condemnation of scandal—the prevalence of this vice; its nature; the many ways of falling into it. Its baneful effects: (1) It murders the soul of a brother in Christ—the value of this soul; (2) propagates the work of the devil. Contrast of Christ's work and teaching with those of the scandalizer. The responsibility of parents with reference to this vice. Exhortation to avoid scandal in every form—to practise the opposite virtue.

In the Epistle which St. Paul addressed to the Christians of Ephesus is to be found a variety of instruction, adapted to different situations and enforcing different duties of a Christian life. He endeavors to make them sensible of the singular favor conferred upon them, in their being called from the gloom of idolatry to the light of the Gospel; from the slavery of sin and ignorance, "to the adoption of children through Jesus Christ" (Eph. i, 5). He insists on the incomparable obligations by which the Christian is bound to his Saviour, "by whose grace we are saved" (ii, 5). He dwells on the sublimity of the "knowledge of the mystery of Christ, which in other generations was not known to the sons of men" (*Ibid.* iii, 4). He animates them to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, as they were all called in one hope, professing one Lord, one faith, one Baptism" (*Ibid.* iv, 3). He warns them against the dangers and guilt of sin; gives counsel to those in the marriage state; inculcates the duties of children to parents; of servants to masters, and informs them by what arms they are to withstand and overthrow the enemy of their souls.

Among many other topics of advice and instruction he exhorts them to "walk circumspectly . . . redeeming time, for the days are evil." To this circumspection we also are called, and upon the same motives. "The days are evil"; the enemies we have to contend with are powerful. Vice lords it over the land with undissembled effrontery, while those who are alarmed and disgusted by its bold appearance are assailed, and their virtue is undermined by the artful

stratagems of our insidious foe. It behooves us "to walk circumspectly," shunning the allurements to sin, and carefully endeavoring that our conduct be not a cause of scandal, a stumbling-block to our fellow-Christians. It is to this latter branch of circumspection that I wish to call your thoughts this day; to induce you to observe a guarded conduct, that your neighbor may not be seduced through your example, or weakened in his attachment to religion and virtue, through your indifference and neglect; for though Our Lord has said that "scandals there must be," yet He has pronounced "wo against that man by whom the scandal cometh" (Matt. xviii, 7). With this view I shall endeavor to convince you of the enormity of the sin of scandal, in its own nature, and to point out to you some of dreadful evils that are its consequences.

Following the usual distinctions of theologians, I must premise that scandal is of two sorts, the one *given*—the other *taken*. The first consists in a real offence, by which our neighbor is allured, or invited to the commission of sin, whereas the second is merely the effect of a disposition to take offence where none is given; to be shocked at evil which exists only in imagination. Let the worldling be informed that, besides the essential malice of the sin which he has committed, he becomes responsible for the scandal he has given to his brother in Jesus Christ; he instantly rejects the idea; considers it the representation of mistaken casuistry, mere squeamishness of conscience, and maintains that if people will be scandalized, it is their own fault. On the other hand, the professed devotee is, or affects to be, scandalized at every weakness of a brother; to be shocked at every foible in another; and considers this disposition, which is not always without sin, but often the indulgence of great uncharitableness, as the effect of a tender piety, a lively sensibility for the interests of religion and virtue.

Let it then be understood, that while I exert myself to decry and diminish the former, I am not advocating the cause of the latter; neither let any of my hearers, by alleging the possibility, or even the frequency of the latter, pretend to exculpate or justify themselves in the commission of the former. But whoever, by his immoral or irreligious example, weakens in the mind of his neighbor the horror for sin in general, or for any particular vice; whoever encourages to the perpetration of guilt by his daring neglect of the law of God; whoever brings into credit that which is contrary to the law of God, or weakens the fences by which his law is guarded, judg-

ment and wo to that man, for God will avenge His law, and visit the offender in His wrath. "He that deceiveth the just in a wicked way shall fall in his own destruction" (Prov. xxviii, 10). According to the expressions of Holy Writ, such a one is a murderer of souls. "The wicked man," says the Lord, "shall die in his iniquity; but at thy hand will I require his blood" (Ezech. iii, 18). He is an Antichrist; for of those who lead their neighbor into error and sin, St. John says, "even now many are become Antichrists" (I John ii, 18). In fact, whoever is the author of scandal is, conformably to every principle of religion, the murderer of souls that are scandalized by him; and whenever, my brethren, you become the wilful cause, the voluntary occasion of sin to your fellow-Christian, either by withholding him from virtue, or inveigling him into the paths of vice; by communicating to him your licentious, immoral, irreligious sentiments, or infecting him with the contagion of your example, you become the murderer of his soul, and his blood will God require at your hand. Though he should be the most ignoble of this world, and the meanest of men, still are you guilty of spiritual homicide. Yes, observes St. Chrysostom, Jesus Christ has not said, "He who scandalizes one of the great ones of the earth." This may, indeed, be a more crying evil; "but he who shall scandalize one of these little ones who believe in me"; thus doing away the error, which might possibly be conceived, that the littleness of the person scandalized might excuse the scandal. Is it not that soul, abject and contemptible as it may be, when judged of by its corporal investment; is not that soul the work of His almighty power; of infinite worth in the eyes of its Creator? Yes, and on this account the God who created it, and ransomed it at an immense expense, and who knows its value, has declared that it were better for you to be buried in the depth of the ocean than dare to commit so heinous an offence. "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones who believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. xviii, 6).

Murderers and assassins! They are more to be shunned than the murderers of the body; they observe a dangerous secrecy—a malicious silence; frequently under the mask of love and friendship they present the poisoned cup, sparkling with the glow of choicest beverage and bedecked with fairest flowers. And who is it that is here consigned to death? It is a brother. Alas! Is it possible

that you could give the murderous blow even to a brother? The child of the same Father who is in heaven; of the same mother, the Church of Jesus Christ, who has borne you in her bosom, and fed you with the same celestial food, the bread of life!

Ah! while it is your duty to lead him to virtue, you breathe into his soul the poison of vice! and not content with precipitating yourselves into the abyss of hell, you drag him with you into the same gulf of misery! Do you not hear the plaintive voice of the poor unfortunate reproaching you with cruelty? or do you not, wherever you go, meet the miserable victims of your unprovoked malice, who say to you: Ah! why have we felt your cruel, your wanton barbarity? Behold the wounds which you inflicted; your consciences are still crimsoned with the blood of ours. Had you not lived to be our ruin we should not now be lamenting in hell; your example emboldened and seduced us; we are lost—lost, forever, but at your hands will the Lord require our blood!

This is no idle declamation, my brethren; it is truth—it is certainty; may you never find it so to your cost. The parent who received her child from heaven, with the strict injunction of leading it back, or directing its steps to the same region of immortality and bliss, perhaps inspires and animates those passions which it is her duty to regulate and compose; instructs her offspring in deception; presents the model of caprice, vanity, or resentment; enkindles the fatal fire of impure love in the yet innocent breast, or fans the flame which early passion had enkindled; or if she does not administer fuel to the passions, yet beholds their glow with unconcern, or without an attempt to extinguish it, from an unwillingness to thwart the darling of her affections, while the cruel indulgence of an indiscreet mother proves the ruin of a spoiled child. It is the duty of parents, of masters, and mistresses; of all, in short, who are placed above others, to edify, in an especial manner, and to lead to virtue, according to their respective means, and the opportunities afforded them, which are frequently very favorable, those whom God, not without design, has placed beneath their care. Remember that it is not sufficient to refrain from inducing or encouraging to what is wrong; it is also required to encourage to what is right, by the lure of good example; sometimes by advice and exhortation. Let not "through thy knowledge the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died" (I Cor. viii, 11). "Wo to the world because of scandal" (Matt. xviii, 7).

If we consider and reflect, we must be convinced that when, by our example, we induce or tempt others into sin, we take a decided part against the Almighty, and Satan-like become the advocates and promoters of iniquity; as if the power of hell were not already sufficient for the Christian's conflict we join in confederacy with the wicked one, and forward his cause, in the ruin of our neighbor. "Even now there are many Antichrists." This expression of the Apostle St. John is certainly strong, but it is not exaggerated. For what is done, or attempted to be done, by the scandalous sinner, this enemy of God, this child of perdition? He preaches by his conduct, and sometimes by his words, the doctrines of iniquity. See him seated, to use the expression of the royal prophet, "on the chair of pestilence" (Ps. i, 1), encircled by his disciples; hear him enforcing the maxims of vice and reprobation, encouraging one to shake off the remains of virtuous shame, which still preserves him from plunging into guilt; congratulating with another on his daring contempt of decency and morality; applauding a third for disregarding the institutions, discipline, laws of the Church which he ridicules as antiquated idle prejudices, as the charms of a religious enchantment which are dissolved by a philosophic mind, as fetters calculated to enslave only the weak and timid, but which the uncontrolled spirit of independent reason spurns with disdain.

This, my brethren, is the jargon, but the successful jargon, by which thousands are duped out of their religion, while they persuade themselves they are asserting the rightful claims of a free-born soul. Our blessed Lord published the good tidings of salvation, the Gospel of peace, under figures and parables; the scandalous Christian everywhere sows the gospel of Satan, if I may presume to use the sacred word gospel to express so foul a system of iniquity; writings are disseminated which serve to corrupt the heart of innocence, to instruct in premature knowledge of guilt the young who read for pleasure while they imbibe a poison, and prepare the way for real pain and sorrow while they shed tears over imaginary griefs, compassionate the cruel disappointments, the distressing anxieties, the bleeding sorrows of fictitious characters; with a name indeed, but without a being.

My young friends, shun with just alarm these dangerous productions; parents keep from the hands and eyes of your children, and I blush to add from your own, for even old age can pour over the love-sick tale with overflowing eye and sentimental sympathy;

banish, banish far away these chronicles of folly and vice, these mysteries of corruption, these parables of seduction, written to captivate the tender mind, by every art and every gaudy ornament which can please the imagination, impose on reason, and favor deception.

Again, our divine Lord went from place to place, scattering, as it were, from His hands, the blessings of His heavenly grace; we behold Him instructing the Samaritan woman, consoling and strengthening a Magdalen, converting Pharisees and sinners; but while the general conduct of the sinner weakens the virtue of many, by a contempt of what virtue and religion inculcate and command, his visits and conversations have a still more fatal tendency. In them he often endeavors to do away those restraints which serve to keep the Christian in the fear of God, and to preserve a horror of vice; he represents that language which tends to awaken the unchaste idea as perfectly harmless; he persuades that those familiarities, which are so strongly opposed by the priest and the moralist, and which reason and conscience prove to be displeasing to the God of purity, are, at the most, but pardonable transgressions, which the warmth of youth, or constitution, or the irresistible force of nature and inclination extenuate, if not allow; that, admitting the existence of a hell, the place of punishment allotted for sin, God is not so cruel, so inexorable, as to inflict such severity of torment on His own creatures, and that, too, for such slight, such passing offences. To succeed with greater certainty He affects surprise at your alarm. He ridicules your fears as mere scruples, and wonders that you can have adopted notions so extraordinary, or which, at least, he is sure are exploded at the present day by every one who has pretensions to good sense; by all who have divested themselves of the trammels of bigotry and prejudice.

My brethren, though you may never have thus outrageously endeavored to break down the fences of virtue, and to destroy the sacred influence of religion, yet, depend upon it, your sins, whatever they may be, provided they are public, or known to others, tend, in some way or other, to the propagation of vice, and the injury of others. Are you seen to behave with levity and disrespect within these holy walls? your example may, at first, disgust, and may always shock certain persons whose virtue is not to be shaken by the encouragement you hold out to as many as shall copy you; nevertheless, some may be induced to lay aside that gravity of de-

portment which they had before considered as requisite in the temple of God, the contagion may spread, others may be infected, and that reverential awe, which was once the characteristic of our nation, and the admiration of foreigners, may be exchanged for that indifference, which, in other countries, produces the smile, the nod, the gaze, the familiar conversation, even during the solemnization of the tremendous mysteries. If it be observed by others, particularly by your inferiors, that you scruple not to use the name of God on every trifling occasion, that you can utter the oath, or the expression bordering at least in sound to an oath, and consequently bordering on profaneness; if you are discovered to indulge in excess, to seek for gain by unlawful or equivocal means, your practices will embolden those who observe you; and the more your conduct may be in other respects correct and regular, the more probability is there of your doing harm by that which is unjustifiable. Neither are you to flatter yourselves that you are not guilty of the sin of scandal, because your example draws not your brother into sin. No, says St. Augustine, I declare to you, my beloved, and I repeat it, he who commits evil in the sight of another, killeth, as much as in him lies, the beholder. He is preserved from death, but you are still a homicide.

Since, then, such is the enormity of this sin, since it is so pernicious in its effects and consequences, let the fear of involving others in your guilt deter you from the commission of evil, teaching you to "walk circumspectly, giving no offence to any one" (II Cor. vi, 3). Henceforward let it be our care to stimulate to virtue, by our exactitude in the performance of every good work; let us shun all dissimulation, but let us strive in all things to please God, "and let our light so shine before men, that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father, who is in heaven" (Matt. v, 16). Let all impartially survey their own souls, and if they can discover that, by their negligence in the service of God, by their absence from the Sacraments, from the great Sacrifice of the Altar, from public worship, they have scandalized or misled their fellow-Christians, or those of their own house; if, by a contemptuous disregard of the fasts and abstinences of the Church, they have disedified their Catholic brethren, and even those who dissent from their religion; if, in a word, they have allured to sin, either in thought, word or deed, by permission or example, by dress or carriage, by teaching the evil which was before unknown, by engaging their neighbor in

dissipating and dangerous amusements, let them grieve that they have imitated the base malice of him "by whom death came into the world" (Wis. ii, 24), and "who was a murderer from the beginning" (John viii, 44). Let them endeavor to cooperate with their blessed Redeemer in the charitable work of reclaiming sinners and leading souls to Christ. We are not all called to be Apostles and evangelists by publicly preaching the Gospel of Christ; but all are called to lend an assisting hand to those who are under our influence and entrusted to our care. They are not made our inferiors merely for our sake; our duties and theirs are correlative; and surely that spiritual avarice must be of the blackest die which withholds from our neighbor that light which may guide his feet into the way of peace. Let us, by our good example and virtuous conduct, diffuse around us the sweet odor of virtue, repair our past negligence, and by promoting the honor of God, and contributing to the salvation of our neighbor, ensure our own future everlasting happiness.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON THE MEANS OF CONFORMING TO OUR BAPTISMAL ENGAGEMENTS

"Put ye on the armour of God."—Eph. vi, 11.

SYNOPSIS.—All assistance in Christian warfare must come from heaven. We may obtain this help in our endeavor to be faithful to our baptismal vows, to lead the spiritual life. Many make no such endeavor. How foolish. To lead this life two things necessary: (1) To keep in subjection the earthly man; (2) to live according to the spirit, doing the things of God. Self-examination and exhortation.

The Apostle St. Paul, who, in this Epistle to the Ephesians, has afforded us instruction upon almost every Christian and social duty, admonishes his disciples, or rather all who aspire to be the disciples of Jesus Christ, that in order to perform the duties of the Christian it is from heaven they are to expect and seek assistance. We have engaged ourselves, my brethren, to serve the Lord God; to Him we have made our vows, all other influence we have renounced. "Remember," says St. Ambrose, "what you answered at your Baptism: you renounced the devil and all his works; the world, with all its pomps and pleasures; you spoke in the presence of the angels, who witnessed your engagements; to deceive, to evade, to deny what you then did, is impossible."

It is only, then, from above that we can derive strength to fufil our obligations; we must be "strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of his power" (Eph. v, 10); but to overcome is the duty of all, as it is in the power of all, through the grace of Him to whom we are engaged; for we can do "all things in him who can strengthen" and console His servants, and evince His almighty "power" by making our "infirmity" victorious over "flesh and blood," over "principalities and powers," over the "rulers of the world of this darkness, over the spirits of wickedness in the high places." But let us remember what the same Apostle tells us in another Epistle; that "we are not debtors to the flesh to live according to the flesh; for," says he, "if you live according to the flesh, you shall die; but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live" (Rom. viii, 12). Most unquestionably we are debtors; we have entered into engagements

with the Most High, and, by these engagements, we are required to deny ourselves, to resist the propensities of the flesh, lest we die; to subdue our headstrong passions, to despise the solicitations and suggestions of the "spirits of wickedness" and the powers of darkness; to withstand with inflexible intrepidity the seducing maxims of a corrupted world, and to conform to the maxims of Jesus Christ, and the inspirations of His Holy Spirit. This, however, will scarcely be contradicted; to proceed, therefore, to that which constitutes the main point and the main difficulty, I shall endeavor this day to show you what is to be done that a life may be led conformably to our engagements, that we may be "heirs of God" and "co-heirs with Jesus Christ" (Rom. viii, 17).

Although the motives, which induce every rational creature to lead a life of mortification according to the spirit, and in opposition to the flesh, are of the most pressing nature, yet such is the degeneracy of Christians that with greater reason than the Apostle we may say that there are many who "so walk," as "to be enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction" (Phil. iii, 18); who seek in earthly gratifications, and the pleasures of sense, that satisfaction which is only to be found in present mortification, and the hope of future enjoyment; who, when they can not, from circumstances and situations, indulge in actual commission, give a loose rein to a corrupt imagination, and the desires of a depraved heart, dwelling in thought and affection on what they can not attain to in reality; "whose god is their belly, whose glory is their shame, who," in one word, "follow earthly things." O, my beloved friends, dear to me, since through you I am to receive the crown of fidelity, dear to your God, who made you, and made you for Himself—O, that weeping over the general corruption of morals, so extensively prevalent, I could turn with complacency to you, and, with the Apostle, exclaim, in terms of holy congratulation, "but you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit; inasmuch as the Spirit of God dwelleth in you" (Rom. viii, 9). O that I could, with confidence, assert that, although your souls are united to your bodies, the spirit united to the flesh, yet that it obeyed not the impulse of the flesh, but that the Holy Ghost was to it the source of life and vigor, directing it in every movement by His divine inspirations! O that the conscience of each one present could bear testimony favorable to the fidelity of each individual; that you could assure yourselves that all was secure within you and without you, that the flesh was in perfect obedience to the

spirit, the spirit to almighty God! But, my brethren, let us inquire what is requisite to constitute a *life* truly *mortified,* that is dead to all that is not God.

I shall confine my answer to two general points, which are absolutely necessary to a "spiritual, mortified" life; but these two points will include by their generality every subordinate requisite. First, it is necessary that we should keep in subjection the earthly man, the old Adam, by repressing that inclination, which is natural to us all, the inclination to gratify our self-love, to indulge and pamper the flesh, to allow full scope and unrestrained freedom to our senses; in a word, to be as free from restraint as possible in every thing. This is what is alluded to by the Apostle when he declares that they who belong to Jesus Christ, have crucified the flesh with its vices and concupiscences; and this is what he unceasingly recommends in all his letters; this he faithfully practised himself. "For though we live in the flesh," he says, "we walk not according to the flesh"; but "I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection."

Here, then, my brethren, it behooves us to examine whether we have hitherto practised this first requisite to a spiritual life. Certainly we are far from this spiritual life, as we are clearly devoid of the spirit of Jesus Christ, if we live in this world with an attachment to it; if gifted naturally with a desire of happiness, we seek terrestrial happiness in seeking the happiness of the body. For the joys of this world are of such a nature that they exclude from the joys of heaven those who are captivated by the joys of the earth, as it is clear that the earthly minded can never be admitted to delight for which they have no relish. Is it not absurd to suppose that they should be admitted to the society of the saints, to be rewarded with a happiness that is to consist in singing the praises of God, whom they admire not, they love not? in contemplating His countenance, the beauties of which they have never contemplated in spirit? whose ideas of beauty and loveliness are quite material, confined to mere corporeal charms and attractions? Shall it be imagined that the vain Narcissus, male or female, whose adoration has been confined to *self,* shall find in heaven that veneration or love of the Deity which on earth should have been employed in meriting the kingdom of heaven? or shall those empty, silly butterflies, who here below are solely employed in mind and action in decorating the exterior, to prove the deficiencies of the interior, and not infrequently exposing the meanness of the picture by the elegance of the frame that

incloses it; thus making, by means of contrast, deformity more deformed—shall these expect to be received by the Almighty into the kingdom of heaven, with no other ornaments or embellishments than those of dress? No; my beloved friends, if in this life we seek for the delights and pleasures which this life affords, we do nothing toward obtaining the happiness of the life to come; if we love and cherish the vanities of time, we can not expect to possess the glories of eternity; in a word, "if you live according to the flesh you shall die; but if by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live." I informed you there were two general points to be attended to, as absolutely necessary to a spiritual life, and this is the second. For it is not sufficient merely to suppress the irregular desires of the flesh, but we are called upon to live "according to the spirit," that is, conformably to the maxims laid down by Jesus Christ, maxims of humility and charity. Turning away with disgust from that ostentatious display of earthly pomp, from that pride of life, which in us poor worms of the earth, who hold ourselves up to view for an hour, and then are summoned away in the midst of our display of reptile consequence, is most absurd and contemptible; we must forget our own importance to pay homage to that eternal, self-existent almighty Being, who is, who was, and who shall be forever. Convinced of our dependent nature, and obeying with awful submission the God "in whom we live, move, and have existence," to Him we must direct our homage, grateful for His innumerable and continual mercies, glowing with love for His transcendent loveliness, directing our thoughts, desires, endeavors toward "that future glory that shall be revealed in us," waiting in "expectation" of the "revelation" to be made to the "children of God" (Rom. viii, 19), "longing and fainting for the courts of the Lord" (Ps. lxxxiii, 3). Kept at a distance from the object of our dearest affections, struggling to be free, and to gain our promised felicity, preserving at least our hearts free from every earthly clog and impediment, not deigning to admire, or even to attend to any short-lived vanity, pressing forward in our journey through this deceitful life, with an ardor becoming the children of God, and heirs to immortal glory; turning neither to the right nor to the left, but with eyes ever fixed on the "sun of justice," and hearts enamoured, captivated, enraptured by the inexhaustible source of incomprehensible beauty, and "desiring to be dissolved that we may be with Christ" (Phil. i, 23).

This, my brethren, is to live according to the spirit, the spirit of *charity,* and of true *wisdom;* a wisdom opposite to the wisdom of the world, which, as St. James says, is "earthly, sensual, diabolical" (Jas. iii, 15). The "wisdom that is from above," he tells us, "is, in the first place, chaste, then peaceable, modest, easy to be persuaded, consenting to the good, full of mercy and good fruits, without judging, without dissimulation" (*Ibid.* 17). Equally free from duplicity and malice, it neither judges with rashness the works of its neighbor, nor upholds the reign of vice from human respect. God is its end and object, as it is derived from Him, and is warmed and animated by Him alone.

Is such your disposition, my dear friends, is such the character of your life? Are you assiduous in resisting and repressing the force of the passions seeking illicit indulgence, in keeping under due restraint those propensities which are ever drawing mankind from spiritual delights to specious, but transient, criminal, fatal enjoyments, which fill the soul with a confused, perturbed pleasure, even while they are present; when gone, are followed by remorse, agony, despair, and receive, too often, their just remuneration in the reprobation of God, and the eternal infliction of His vengeance. Ah! whatever may have been your conduct to the present time, thanks be to the God of mercy, He has spared you till this moment; He has not visited you in His wrath, but calls out to you, wishing to rescue you from guilt and misfortune; to draw you to Himself and bliss.

Come then, my brethren, let us now begin; there is danger in delay, and thousands by delay have lost the golden opportunity which was in their hands, and now are lamenting, with unavailing sorrow, their infatuation and their guilt. Rise from your lethargy, shake off the slumbers of death, efface whatever marks may be in you of the sensual, animal, and terrestrial man; and in its place substitute the image of the true disciple, the genuine Christian. Mortify the flesh that the spirit may gain strength by the prostration of its most dangerous enemy. Mortify the will, which, when indulged, is an ungrateful and traitorous rebel, that seeks our destruction and leads us into certain danger, and as certain ruin.

Persuade not yourselves that you can live in peace and security; there is no peace for the Christian in this life, which is a state of continual war and conflict. Be, then, prepared for battle; put on the armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil

day, and in all things to stand perfect. You have enemies to encounter, but you have a friend and supporter in the God of heaven; His grace shall invigorate you, His presence give a renewal of strength and confidence to you, while it shall confound your foes and put them to flight.

These are your hopes at present, these your resources; hereafter you have to encourage and support these hopes, a reward awaiting you in the kingdom of your God, a reward of infinite value, and of endless duration in the possession of Him for eternity.

FESTIVAL OF ALL SAINTS

ON IMITATING THE EXAMPLE OF THE SAINTS

"I saw a great multitude, which no one could number, of all nations, and tribes, and people, and tongues, standing before the throne, and in the presence of the Lamb."—Apoc. vii, 9.

SYNOPSIS.—The picture put before the mind by the Church on this great feast day. Two lessons to be drawn; first, we can imitate: second, we can receive the same reward. We are called to be saints. The means of attaining sanctity are at our disposal. The objections given by some. These are founded on selfishness and dislike of mortification. The saints were as we are now—same nature, dispositions, passions, tendencies, etc. Had to contend against same world, same flesh, same devil. The same omnipotent God rules now; the same Saviour has merited the same graces. Saints of every age, sex, condition in life. Effect of this consideration on life of St. Augustine. Exhortation to work and to trust in the love and mercy of God.

What a splendid spectacle is here laid open to our view, my brethren; the veil is drawn aside; heaven is thrown open before us, and we are permitted to contemplate the blessed and honorable assemblage of angels and archangels, of cherubim and seraphim, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors and virgins, clothed in white robes of spotless innocence, and bearing in their hands palms of victory and triumph! Let us contemplate this glorious association, and remembering that we are called to the same glory, let us consider attentively their state of unchangeable felicity, that we may be inspirited to emulate their exertions, by a view of their reward. Ah, my friends, pain and sorrow have no admission there; toil and conflict are no more; the tear no longer trickles down the cheek of grief; the sigh no longer heaves the breast of anguish. Blessed are they who mourned; now are they indeed comforted; joy is theirs, and jubilation, and ecstasy; serene, yet rapturous bliss is their portion forever.

But while you view the realms of bliss and glory, where these illustrious champions sit enthroned, remember that you are invited to a participation of their immortal honors; that they are your fellow-soldiers and fellow-members in Christ Jesus; that, in some measure, you are called upon to complete their labors by prosecuting the same war in which they were engaged; that, surrounded by enemies, they fought their way through opposing legions, and

reached the land of their inheritance, that you are called to follow where they have led the way, to force a passage through hostile ranks, and to rejoin your Leader. He is gone before, it is ours to follow. These our victorious comrades look down upon us with tenderest interest; they witness our struggles; they powerfully plead our cause before the throne of God, and earnestly desire our union with them. We may participate in their glory if we imitate their fortitude and perseverance. It is for this the Catholic Church has instituted the festival we now solemnize, and the particular feasts of the saints, which we celebrate throughout the year, to thank God for His graces bestowed upon His saints; to induce us to fight a good fight, and to follow their example by placing before our eyes their exertions and their reward; and to implore their intercession with the great King, Our Lord, and Our God. That you may derive the advantage intended by the Church of God, and be animated to proceed with intrepidity in the cause of God and your salvation, I purpose to show you that the example of the saints takes away every pretext of difficulty in consequence of natural weakness, or particular circumstances, and that no difficulty is permitted by God that can excuse us from becoming saints.

First, to be saints in heaven it is clearly evident that we must be saints on earth; for heaven is the reward of sanctity. This throws a gloom over the minds of some Christians, who recoil at the thought; perhaps from an interior conviction, that they are not leading lives which can in any way claim the title of sanctity. They endeavor to invent some distinction, by means of which they hope to be admitted to the crown exclusively promised to sanctity, without the practise of those offices and duties which constitute sanctity. They wish to persuade themselves that they may escape the punishments of the next life, as not being very guilty, and thus be permitted to come into heaven, without that merit which is certainly necessary for admission into the kingdom of holiness. As if they could expect to be admitted to the nuptial banquet with extinguished lamps, or as if the Christian were only required to avoid evil, without the obligation of doing good. They excuse themselves, therefore, by saying they admire and applaud those who are more resolute and perseverant, but for themselves, they indeed could wish to live the life of saints, but, alas! so frail are they, and so far above their strength are the toils of sanctity, that they admire, but can not imitate, the example which is set before them.

Oh, my friends, you can not imitate the saints in the practise of sanctity! And does the Almighty then require of you that you should be holy when you have not the means, the power of being so? Impossible; never will He exact anything from you that is above your strength. "He will not suffer you," says St. Paul, "to be tempted above what you are able" (I Cor. x, 13), and yet He commands you to be saints. "Be ye holy," that is saintly, "because I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. xix, 2). "Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v, 48), that is, be ye filled with the grace of God, be ye decorated with the beauty and loveliness of holiness, and let the perfection of the Most High embellish your souls. Away, then, with these excuses, mere pretexts, the artful pleas of self-love and self-deceiving sloth: by which thousands are duped and kept in a state of lukewarm indevotion, satisfied if they avoid the more shocking crimes, and those to which, perhaps, they have no propensity, but conniving at, palliating, and cherishing some favorite faults, which they have not the courage to eradicate or oppose. They persuade themselves that, living in the world, they are licensed as to the neglect of certain exercises of devotion, or practises of piety, and the indulgence of certain vanities and gratifications, the commission of certain minor faults which they are pleased to qualify by the extenuating appellation of defects, or, it may be, imperfections.

But are not all required to attain to that degree of perfection which comes within their reach and ability? Or, when they renounced in Baptism the pomps and vanities of the world, was there any salvo made for them; any protest entered in their behalf; any exception in their favor? No, my brethren. We are called to holiness, and to attain to holiness is not impossible; it is in the power of each and of all; the aid of the Almighty is offered to all, and therefore we shall be without excuse before the judgment seat of God, if it appear that we have not labored to become saints, and that we have not, in fact, become saints in this world.

But who were they whose triumphs we commemorate? What were they? Were they not like ourselves? Encompassed by the same mortal frame; invested with the same flesh; the same blood running in their veins? with the same senses, dispositions, inclinations, affections, passions, and natural propensities? Had they not the same difficulties to encounter as we? the same temptations to subdue? Alas! many of them had to resist and to overcome obstacles,

from situation and circumstances, from temperament and habit, incomparably greater than any we have to contend with. When they lived, did not our adversary, the devil, like a roaring lion, go about seeking whom he might devour? Was not the world then in opposition to God? Were not its pleasures then as dissipating, as fatal as at present? and were they not equally attractive? Did they not feel a law in their members waging war against the spirit and law of God? The maxims of the world, and the torrent of custom were to be surmounted by them, as well as by us. And how, then, did they resist? How did they succeed? Had they helps unknown or denied to us? Did they enjoy greater helps from heaven? Oh, no. Their God is also our God, and is as ready to help us as He was to help them, nor is He less able. No; the arm of the Lord is not shortened; the boundless ocean of His mercy is neither dried up nor diminished; the Blood of Jesus, which flowed for them, and in which they placed their hope, flowed for us also, and now pleads as powerfully for us as it did for them. If by it they became saints, so also may we. If we be not pure and holy, it is because we are unwilling so to be; we wilfully neglect graces, which would raise us from our state of servitude to the perfect liberty of the children of God, and finally, from the dunghill of this earth, to the throne of heavenly glory, to the society of the princes of His people. Blush, then, ye who bear the name of Christian, the children of the Lord of heaven, the disciples of Jesus, the Man-God, who came down from heaven to raise us up to heaven. Be no longer terrified, no longer sunk in the sleep of death, no longer hesitating in doubt and irresolution, but arise; suddenly arise, spring forward, and snatch the crown which your immortal Conqueror holds forth to you, and invites you to seize.

Yes, He invites and encourages you to enterprise and conquest. Look, He says to you, behold those happy souls, now great and glorious. They once, like you, were confined within the prison of their bodies, and inhabited this sinful earth. They had difficulties to overcome, temptations to overcome: like you, they were weak and prone to evil, delicate and tender. Virgins of early age, and softest nature, despised the allurements of the flesh, and consecrated their bodies and their souls to Me. In every age of life, in either sex, young and old, men bending under a weight of years, and youthful maidens, became witnesses to My name and doctrines and died for My sake. They struggled and they fought, but My grace gave

them strength and victory. The same grace is offered to you; your reward shall be the same; and can not you perform what they have performed?

It was this that roused the spirit of St. Augustine to heroic exertion; he was ashamed to be outdone by the young, the weak, the illiterate. Shall they take heaven by storm, said he, and shall I recline in sloth and idleness; shall I give up the crown without a struggle, without a single effort? Let the same reflection produce the same effects in you, my brethren: be wise, nor let the short enjoyments of this life, the amusements of an hour, be preferred to eternal honor, joy and glory, nor let the mortifications and self-denials, by which the saints have purchased everlasting peace, be feared and abhorred more than the never-ending wo and torment prepared for the wicked.

Talk no more of your weakness; it is the consciousness of your weakness, that is to be to you a source of strength. Confide, but not in yourselves. In God is my trust, should be, and is, the motto of the Christian. The Apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, were weak and helpless of themselves, but were enabled to perform prodigies by Him who was their support. Could they have braved the fury of tyrants, the prejudices of an indignant world? Could they, unlettered as they were, have confounded the reasonings of the philosophers, the sages of the earth, and silenced the eloquence of the greatest orators? Could they have defied the ingenuity of their tormentors, have smiled on the rack, and under the sword? Could they have borne the fierce flame that encompassed their bodies as the soft breathing of a refreshing breeze? and, what is still more, could they have resisted the impetuous fire of concupiscence, and preserved their bodies and their souls, their thoughts and their desires, from all the assaults of lust, without supernatural aid, without the power and grace of God? This supernatural aid, this power and grace, is offered to you, my brethren; yes, to all it is offered, and if you will avail yourselves of it, will bear you triumphant over every obstacle, and place you in the regions of security, peace and everlasting felicity.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON THE VICE OF HYPOCRISY

"Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites?"—Matt. xxii, 18.

SYNOPSIS.—The numerous attempts of the scribes and Pharisees to entrap Our Lord. The attempt in this case; the persons concerned; the motives; the plan; its execution; its failure. How Christ received the embassy. His rebuke: the revelation of the character of His enemies. His answer to the question. The effect of His solution of the difficulty. Lessons to be drawn: sincerity, honesty of purpose, steadfastness to the law of God even in time of trial and adversity. The reward.

Throughout the life of Jesus Christ we can not but be astonished at the unyielding malice with which He was persecuted by those of His own nation. The scribes, the Pharisees, the doctors of the law, were, on every occasion, endeavoring to interrupt Him in His exhortations, to impede the designs of His charity, and to deprive Him of that esteem and veneration, which the less enlightened but more candid multitude on all occasions manifested to Him. In this Gospel we have a striking instance of their malevolent designs upon our blessed Redeemer, and of their insidious artifices being turned to their own confusion. Baffled in their former attempts, they retire with shame on their foreheads, but revenge in their hearts; determined by some deep-laid contrivance to surprise His prudence, and effect His ruin. They had already tried Him on the subject of religion, and on every occasion His answers had evinced a wisdom and sanctity, that had contributed rather to raise than injure His reputation. Having, therefore, consulted together, they resolved on sending to Him their emissaries, who shall propose to Him a question, which they thought was impossible to answer without either incurring the displeasure of the people, or drawing down upon Himself all the resentment of the Roman præter as a disaffected subject and an enemy to the emperor. My brethren, from a view of their malice may we learn to act on every occasion with uprightness and sincerity, and in the behavior of Our Lord may we discover and copy a model so eminently deserving of our imitation.

First, the Pharisees "sent to Him their disciples with the Hero-

dians." Herod, at that time king of Galilee, was actually at Jerusalem, to celebrate the feast of the Passover; and Nazareth, the abode of Jesus, was under his jurisdiction. Our Lord was consequently his subject; while Herod professed the strongest attachment to the Roman emperor. These considerations induced the Pharisees to join some of his partisans with their own disciples. Could they succeed in extorting from Him any expression detractive from the honor or authority of Cæsar, they knew He must be crushed by a power from which all the efforts of the people would be unable to save Him. Before Him present themselves then the disciples of the Pharisees; and those were doubtless chosen who were the best qualified to perform the character of deception, to carry the appearance of piety, the fear of God, and religion, even to scrupulosity. They affect the semblance of respectfulness, and in conformity with their instructions they say: "Master, we know that thou speakest the truth, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man, for thou dost not regard the person of man" (Matt. xxii, 16). Base hypocrites! this was indeed the true character of our Saviour, and what they said, their consciences convinced them was the truth; but their intention was to flatter, by flattery to throw our Redeemer off His guard, and to draw from Him a sentiment or expression which might, by any possible distortion, be interpreted to His prejudice.

Can you hear unmoved, my brethren, the deceitful eulogiums of these dissemblers? But are you never guilty of criminal adulation to obtain your ends? Do you never descend to commend with your lips those whom in your hearts you know to be undeserving? Alas! the world is, as it were, a school for dissimulation. Actuated by the same spirit, Christians, as they are named, degrade themselves by encomiums which they bestow with liberal profusion, while they are conscious they are violating the maxims of sincerity, and the laws of truth; while they know that in reality they are dealing out mere lies. Never be you guilty, my friends, of this sinful deception. To be adepts in the art of paying compliments is generally nothing more than to be accomplished in the art of flattery and lying: be not startled at the expression; they may be differently named by the world, with a view to palliate a too prevalent vice; but on the same principle, and with the same intention, many practises have lost their real names in the language of worldly vanity. Still, however, vice will be vice, and virtue, virtue, in the sight of God:

worldlings may affect to be shocked at the name, and flatter their consciences into a false peace; while they commit sin, without scruple, under an extenuating appellation; they may alter their vocabulary at pleasure, and what are the most enormous crimes, and what were once denominated as such, they may soften down to foibles, or term, if they please, the *amiable weaknesses* of our nature: but the law of God, like the eternal mind, which dictated it, can never vary; names may be altered, but right and wrong are determined by the divine Will; the essences of things are immutable.

Trust not, then, to the adulatory praises of a treacherous world: the ruin of thousands has been effected under the mask of friendship; and virtue is never in greater danger of being subdued than when assailed by the soothing sounds of commendation. Let female vanity and female simplicity be particularly aware of flattery. Unsuspecting themselves, and from their own sincerity credulous of the candor of others, often do they mistake the encomium which designing adulation bestows on them, for ingenuous openness; concluding that they who are ready to applaud the trifling merit of others must be themselves persons of valuable desert. Praise would cease to be dangerous, were it well understood to be generally interested, frequently falsehood in its worst disguise, and therefore always to be suspected.

The deputies from the Pharisees having thus prefaced their discourse, they proceed: "Tell us, therefore, what thou thinkest; is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar, or not?" (Matt. xxii, 17). No question could have been more artfully devised; and considering the nature of the Jewish theocracy, its peculiar laws and constitution, the diversity of opinions, which, at that time prevailed, respecting their terrestrial independence, the question was exceedingly difficult to resolve in such manner as to give umbrage to no party. The people who pretended to have no king but God, and who made independence of all earthly power an essential point in their religion, were prepared to abandon Our Lord, whom they had hitherto venerated and protected, should He attribute to Cæsar any authority which they were not disposed to acknowledge. The Pharisees were at hand to magnify any dubious expression into a disrespect for the law of God and to stir up the people against our Saviour should His answer be susceptible of an interpretation opposite to their prejudice, or the pretended rights of religion. On the other hand, the Herodians, who were joined in the deputation, were prepared to engage the

governor to avenge the cause of Cæsar, by whom Herod had been raised to the government of Galilee.

The reply to their question was rendered still more perplexing by reason of the diversity of sentiments which prevailed among the Jews themselves on this subject. Of these some were closely attached to the Romans, and of course maintained the lawfulness and obligation of paying tribute; while others, who passed for strict observers of the law, for true and faithful Israelites (and among these was the major part of the Pharisees), maintained with inflexible zeal, that it was not permitted to pay tribute to a foreign prince, that it was due to God only, the founder of their religion and government, and ought to be deposited in the treasury of the Temple, and expended in the worship of God, and the support of His ministry.

The people already began to feel uneasy under the Roman yoke, to look up to Jesus as the Son of David, as their future King, and to expect from Him their deliverance from foreign domination. If, then, His answer should determine in favor of Cæsar, what would be the sentiments of the people in His regard? If against Cæsar, and the payment of tribute, He was ruined. What consummate art, and what deep-laid malice! The chiefs among the Jewish people had thus contrived a plan which they conceived must inevitably subvert the influence of Our Lord with the people, or expose Him as an enemy to the State. Ah, my brethren, learn from this example of the scribes and Pharisees to what lengths dissimulation, hypocrisy and malice will go to effect their purpose, and this, too, while they fondly persuade themselves they are actuated by a laudable zeal for virtue and truth! Learn hence to suspect your own intentions, wherever your personal interest is concerned; for often, too often, do we condemn the conduct of others, or acquit ourselves under the idea of being guided by the purest motives, when self-love is at the helm, and regulates our course.

Second. But in vain did these artful hypocrites attempt to circumvent our blessed Redeemer. His supreme wisdom confounds His enemies, and detects the snare which they had laid for Him with so much dexterity and malevolence. Knowing their malice, He says: "Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites?" (Matt. xxii, 18). Thus does he lay bare the deceit of their hearts, and at once repels the crafty assailment of their insinuating praises. Their flattery is exposed and silenced. Should not we, my friends, frequently speak and

act in this manner; when, on the contrary, we suffer ourselves to be soothed by the language of adulation? Ought not we, instead of swallowing with avidity the honeyed poison, to throw it from us, and dash to the ground the seducing cup, which is ministered to us by deceit! The Lord knew the hearts of His enemies, and exposed their malignity. When men, in secrecy and silence, lay snares to injure, seduce or destroy His servants, do they imagine that their guilt escapes the observation of God? Do they flatter themselves that their machinations are invisible to the eye of the Lord? And when we address ourselves to Him, let us remember that He not only beholds the motion of our lips, but penetrates into the most secret recesses of our hearts: and, alas! how much dissimulation and hypocrisy does He not there discover! We, indeed, give Him the titles which are His due, "we call him Master and Lord; and we say well, for such he indeed is" (John xiii, 13); we call Him our model and our God: but may He not reply: If I am your God, where is your respect, your obedience, your docility, and your love? "Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites?" You ask for humility, purity, recollection, and devotion; you solicit a variety of gifts and graces. Mere words and nothing more! "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me" (Mark vii, 6). You ask for grace, but you desire it not; you, on the contrary, do all that is in your power to prevent Me from bestowing it; and when it is received, you act in such manner as to stifle it within you, or to obstruct its operations.

If we wish to receive the divine grace, let us be sensible of its worth, and sincerely desire it; let us lament our past ingratitude, and endeavor to co-operate with it when it is bestowed, and God will not refuse us strength and support amply sufficient to bear with every trial, and to withstand every temptation.

It would have required a lengthened dissertation to explain to the people that, although God himself was the founder of their civil, no less than of their religious establishment, although He had constituted them free, and preserved them independent, as long as they continued to be faithful to His law and appointments; it was, notwithstanding, His will that they should submit with docility and respect to that foreign power, to which His providence had subjected them in punishment of their repeated infidelities and prevarications. Such language would not have been relished by the people and the Pharisees, or the Herodians, would have made it appear ir-

religious or seditious by means of their comments and interpretation; Jesus, therefore, takes a more simple and concise way, more effectual, and less exposed to misrepresentation: "Show me," says He, "the tribute-coin. . . . Jesus saith to them: Whose image and inscription is this? They say to him: It is Cæsar's." But in making this reply, they did not immediately perceive that they had themselves destroyed the snare they had laid to ruin our blessed Lord. For now the question was solved, the difficulty removed, and a solution offered, which could give no reasonable offense to any party. For, if Cæsar could issue a coin bearing his name and figure, it was incontestible that the nation was subject to him, and could lawfully pay the tribute which he called for as their ruler and sovereign. The conclusion was self-evident. "Then he said to them: Render therefore to Cæsar the things," etc. Great and admirable maxim this; which extends much further than the question of the Pharisees! for Our Lord generally takes occasion to give more ample instruction, both with respect to belief and practise, than the actual circumstance seems rigidly to demand.

This decision of Our Lord is therefore a maxim of religion, a precept of the new law. We are happily removed from the yoke of foreign domination: Cæsar is not to us a foreign prince; we acknowledge him as our lawful sovereign; we have been placed under his sway by the disposition of Providence, and to him, as to our liege lord, we owe, not only tribute, but obedience, fidelity and even actual service, each according to his respective situation. We owe our lives and services to our king and country; to the State, to the community, and the public weal; and we violate our duty if we become seditious or refractory. Though often excluded, by reason of our religion, from the principal offices of State, and, on the same account, often subject to the odious imputations with which calumny and malice think proper to asperse our attachment to religion and conscience, yet, let us ever conduct ourselves as faithful and loyal subjects, and if we can not *conciliate* the confidence and affection of our rulers and fellow-citizens, let us do that which is more in the sight of our supreme Lord, let us always deserve them. Ever true to our country and our king, let us endeavor to live peaceable lives, giving "to Cæsar what belongs to Cæsar," our allegiance, our fidelity, and let not any hope of terrestrial preferment or emolument induce one of us to betray our conscience. We are convinced of the truth of the religion which we profess; if necessary, let us

lay down our lives rather than relinquish our faith; our ancestors bled in its defense, and though exposed to the loss of property, of character, and life, they maintained their religion—they were true to God and faithful observers of His law in times of inconceivable difficulty and danger. Let us be always disposed to imitate their conduct, if ever the same should be required of us. "Let us give to God," etc. We owe Him our being; we owe Him interior and exterior worship; submission to the mysteries of faith; the obsequiousness of our understanding to what He reveals; all the sentiments of our heart by a love of preference; the compliance of our will to all His commands. We owe Him a purity of body and soul; fidelity to the dictates of conscience; a conformity of all our actions to the regulations of His divine law, and an inviolable attachment to the religion which Jesus Christ, the Son of God, first established, and which, as His word is true, and His power equal to His promise, He will preserve pure, and unalloyed with error, to the end of the world. For He has declared that the "gates of hell shall never prevail against his church" (Matt. xvi, 18).

Ah! my brethren, do we fulfil these duties? If our life and being belong to God, our time and our employments belong to Him. Do we give him our employments? Do we give Him our time? Did we, when we gave away, with sacrilegious profusion and unhallowed joy, so much of it to sinful pleasures, to worldly vanities, to idle, if not criminal amusements, during which God was not once thought of: His presence not once called to mind? Did we give Him our hearts and affections, when we sought in His creatures wherewith to satisfy our desires, and desired no enjoyments, no pleasures, but merely of a terrestrial nature, to gratify our immortal souls, which, however, can never be filled (such is their capacity) with anything less than God himself?

Do you, my brethren, faithfully acquit yourselves to Him of your duty in regard of prayer? On days particularly appointed for His worship do you make His worship your particular employment; or do you not give all to the world and to the passions to which we owe nothing, for we were created for God alone? and, to give them what no way belongs to them, do you not rob God of what is strictly His due; for to Him we owe all that we have and all that we are. O Christians, let us acknowledge our negligence, when we consider that what we were alone created to attend to, that alone is, of all things, the least regarded; but let us also repent and amend. Let

us henceforth endeavor to perform all the duties of citizens and subjects, and all the peculiar duties of our state and calling: let us ever "give to Cæsar," etc.; but let us never forget to "give to God," etc.; so that being faithful over a few things, we may be placed by Him over many things, and by Him be admitted into the joys of Our Lord.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON SUDDEN DEATH

"Lord, my daughter is even now dead; but, come, lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live."—Matt. ix, 18.

SYNOPSIS.—To-day's Gospel shows the mercy and kindness of our God, and gives us the opportunity to meditate upon death. Reflections that must come to the young woman on contemplating the dead daughter of Jairus. Pregnant reflections for the young man. The vanity of worldly things made apparent to all; in a very striking manner to St. Francis Borgia. Reflections for the parent on the death of a child. Death certain for us all. The sentiments of resignation and confidence inculcated. The benefit of frequent meditation on death.

The merciful compassion of our Saviour Jesus Christ, as exhibited to us by the evangelists, calls forth every sentiment of love and gratitude from the true Christian: in His life, as in his painful and ignominious death, endured for us, He proves His tender regard for sinful man. In this day's Gospel we see Him displaying His divine power by the cure of a dreadful malady and by raising to life the daughter of Jairus, "one of the rulers of the synagogue" (Mark v, 22). We learn from St. Mark (v) that on his first coming to Jesus his daughter was yet alive, and "he besought" our Saviour "to lay his hand upon her," that she might be restored to health (23); but while our Saviour was restoring to health and comfort the woman afflicted with the flux of blood, word is brought to him "that his daughter is dead," and he is desired to desist from further solicitation. Oh, what a sorrowful intelligence was here given to the afflicted father! what a wound to his already sinking soul! How cruel does he think the rebuke by which he is requested no longer to trouble the friend to mankind, the more than human physician, with fruitless entreaties! In the very moment of confidence every hope is blasted! "Thy daughter is dead; why dost thou trouble the master any further?" O Death! in thy hourly visitations to man, who was born to die, how many lofty hopes dost thou not overthrow—how many extensive projects dost thou not confound—how many thousands dost thou not tear away from amidst the full enjoyment of earthly pleasure; from the circle of laughter and

thoughtless joy, I will not say to remove them lifeless to the grave (for that is only a temporary repose for the body) but to bury them in the bottomless pit of hell, where neither joy, nor comfort, nor light, nor one moment of ease shall ever be experienced! Let us make some reflections on the death which is offered to our view this day, that we may not, when our hour comes, be taken unawares, but being still alive to God, may "sleep in the Lord." The circumstances of the death presented to us in the Gospel may be instructive to three conditions of life in particular, and may afford a salutary instruction to all situations and states in general.

In the first place, the death of the daughter of Jairus presents a multitude of useful reflections to the young of the female sex. Let them in imagination present before their eyes this young woman, who has just expired; or one of their female friends and companions, who, but a little while ago, shared with them the pleasures of life, but is now no more as to this world. Ah! she is gone from among you, whom she enlivened by her humor; whom she animated to hilarity by her example! She is now no more! But did she, by her example and persuasion, induce you to vanity or sin? She is no more to this world! her body lies in the cold grave! But, oh! where is her soul? Scarcely was she seen upon the face of the earth, and has disappeared! As described by the sacred penman, she came forth as a flower, just appeared, and was admired, and presently withered and died away! Alas! did she place her heart on this vain world? Did she seek to please it and forget her God? Was the beauty of her soul forgotten in a criminal attention to the body? Did she neglect to cultivate the immortal soul, while all her care was given to the decoration of mere clay? Oh, females, what deplorable folly! and for what an insignificant bauble has heaven been thrown away! If with still greater guilt the fading charms of person were studied and improved to obtain admiration; if modesty, the best jewel of either sex, was disregarded, and in compliance with the example of a licentious age, modes of dress were adopted which are intended as snares, and which, in fact, excite and fan the fire of passion in the corrupted heart, while they distress, and agitate, and alarm the virtuous. Oh, if, like so many of her sex, such was her life and conduct, and if, at the same time, perhaps, she ridiculed and derided the more reserved and modest, who dared to deviate from the common path, and in spite of every inducement refused to seek an earthly conquest gained by the displeasure of their

celestial spouse; if such was her character and manner of life, death has indeed destroyed all on which her heart was set, and involved her in misery! Oh, how much more happy, as well as wise, is the youthful Christian maiden, who by a frequent meditation on death has learned to undervalue all that she can present to the admiration of a sinful world, and all that the world can offer to her, as of short duration, evanescent, and as a delusion; who, certain that she must soon be taken out of the world, renounces all affection for its follies, vanities, and crimes, resolves never to fix her heart upon what, like the meteor, just emits a dazzling luster and disappears; and if her condition requires that she should mix with the children of the world, does it as seldom as possible, always with dread and apprehension, and only with the intention of complying with the will of God and the disposition of His providence.

Let the youthful now of the other sex approach and contemplate the corpse of the deceased. It is by frequent consideration of that inevitable event to you, and to all mankind, that you are to subdue the violence of passion, and at a time of life when constitution, inclination, the example of equals, when, in a word, all that surrounds you invites to present enjoyment, you are to preserve yourselves from the general corruption, which involves so many in the death of sin, and in the future everlasting death, the certain consequence of an obstinate persistence in it. Does the fire of concupiscence glow within you, or have you to sustain continued combats with that dangerous enemy? for once reflect with serious thought on that which passes before your eyes. Dead is that fond object of your affections, of your homage, and profane worship! Behold her countenance, pale and ghastly, the luster of those eyes which used to sparkle is no more; no longer observed is the smile which once delighted, a livid horror disfigures the face; moisture begins to cover the skin, and corruption has already manifested itself in the flesh. Here is the idol to which was offered the incense of adulation, the divinity to which was often prostituted a profane homage, to the prejudice of the true God by whom all things were made; here is laid out the being on whom, forgetful of your God, depended, or seemed to depend, all your happiness, whose smile diffused joy through your soul, whose frown spread a gloom of deepest melancholy.

Oh, my Christian friends, will you never open your eyes! Will you never discover, or rather will you never despise, the acknowl-

edged illusion? Like the divinities whom you worship, you shall perish: like them, become the prey of worms! Why will you not give yourselves to the living and eternal God? Why will you not place your hearts on true beauty that shall never perish or decay? It was a view of the alteration which death makes in the fairest forms that impressed the illustrious St. Francis Borgia with a strong sense of man's mortality, and from the Duke of Gandia, and viceroy of Catalonia, transformed him into a humble religious, in the Society of Jesus. Commissioned to convey to Granada the corpse of the Empress Isabella, there to be deposited in the royal monument, and required to swear to the magistrates of that city that it was the body of the deceased empress, on opening the coffin and unveiling the face, so noisome was the stench which the body exhaled, so ghastly and hideous was that countenance which had been the admiration of the court and the wonder of all Spain, that Francis could only swear that from the care with which it had been guarded on the road it was the body of Isabella, but could give no testimony from the recognition of a single feature, which, when living, he had contemplated with delight. A sudden change was wrought in him, and during the thirty-three years that he survived this event, the impression made on his mind was never obliterated. Struck at the awful spectacle, he said to himself: "Oh! what is now become of those eyes once so sparkling? Where is now the beauty and grace which animated and adorned the countenance, which we so lately beheld? Is this her sacred Majesty, Donna Isabella? Is this my royal mistress, my empress, and my queen?"

When he returned from the celebration of the funeral obsequies he locked himself in his chamber and passed the whole night without sleep. Prostrate on the floor, and shedding floods of tears, he exclaimed: "My soul, what seekest thou in this world? How long wilt thou pursue and grasp at shadows! What is she become, who, but a little while ago, was so beautiful, so powerful, so exalted? Death, who has leveled to the dust the wearer of the imperial diadem, has already resumed his bow and taken his aim at me. Soon shall he give the blow that must strike me dead. Would it not, then, be an act of the most urgent prudence, to prevent the fatal consequences of that stroke, by dying now to the world, that at my death I may live to God?" Would to God that the young would meditate well on a subject which, notwithstanding their early age, may be nearer to them than it is to the hoary elder who totters be-

neath the weight of fourscore years; for the tempest which rends the aged oak does not unfrequently sweep away the tender flower!

Let parents also consider well the scene presented to us in the Gospel. "Thy daughter is dead." Yes, that child is taken away from you forever, who was the object of your tenderest affections, the solace of your life, and the basis of your hopes. If in that child you ever beheld the gift of God, a deposit left for a while in your hands, with a right still reserved to Himself to resume it, whenever it should seem good to him; if you educated your offspring in the sacred maxims of religion; if you formed your son or your daughter to the practise of piety and devotion; if you removed from their eyes, their ears, whatever might injure their innocence; if you never connived at their faults, never encouraged their dangerous propensities, nor ever feared to oppose them; ah! then you have not suffered a loss—you prepared their souls for heaven, you did your duty, and you now surrender them to God, who gave them. But, on the contrary, if you have considered your children as your own property; if you have doated upon them with immoderate affection, flattered their inclinations, and ministered to their illicit wants and pretensions; if you educated them for the world, and not for God, filling their minds with notions of ambition and glory, their hearts with desires of earthly vanity and worldly pleasures; if, to enrich them, you have defrauded your neighbor, or, by a robbery, not often attended to, neglected the poor; if you have been the first to stifle the seeds of those virtues which appear opposite to your views, which, you conceive, might prevent your child from excelling in fashionable accomplishments; if you have discouraged that humility which might make your children less attentive to modish formality and ridiculous affection; if you have been the first to ridicule, as squeamish prudery, that virtuous, that heavenly purity, which shudders at the bare idea of vice; if you have opposed a piety that was above your own pursuit, or which was not exactly conformable to your own ideas; if you have thwarted them on the subject of their vocation to a state of life, which God had seemed to indicate, and which, therefore, you had no authority to set aside; if you have done all that was in your power to make the world and its pomps agreeable to them, to subject them to those vanities and frivolous passions to which yourselves were unfortunately enslaved, to bring them forward in life, as it is called—that is, to introduce them into the societies, companies and amusements of this life, where the life to come is never thought

on; to set their hearts upon the representations of the theater, where, to give entertainment to curiosity and zest to pleasure, the most impressive and most dangerous scenes and situations of common life are brought forward and exaggerated; if you have procured for them, or suffered them to peruse, publications calculated to pervert their understandings, or corrupt their hearts; if you have fomented in them vanity or impurity, by approving or tolerating the dress of immodesty, the air and gesture of lasciviousness, the loose discourse, or oblique insinuation; if you have allowed them to remain in ignorance of the mysteries and duties of religion, to neglect the Sacraments, to cherish an habitual disgust of prayer, and works of piety—parents! if this have been your conduct, and your child be dead, you are indeed without consolation! The death of your child is a chastisement of heaven—its wo is inevitable; and your sin can only be repaired by repentance, to be terminated only by your death.

Oh, my friends, from what has been said you will discover how extensive is the duty of parents, how important the charge intrusted to them, and how generally the duties of a parent are neglected. But, my brethren, whatever be our condition and state of life, whether parents or not, whether we are young or old, or in the maturity of steady age, we may all of us derive benefit from an attentive consideration of this day's Gospel; and as we are all concerned (for death awaits us all), we shall do well to meditate seriously upon that event, on which our everlasting destiny depends. The day is now seen in the divine prescience on which our eye shall be closed forever to the view of earthly objects! The day shall come when our friends shall say of us, "He is dead," or, "She is no more." Our Lord said to the ruler of the synagogue, as we read in St. Mark, v. 36, "Fear not; only believe." These sentiments of faith and confidence, the true and faithful Christian will cherish, and by them will he be supported in the hour of death. Then, my friends, will our transgressions rush upon our memory. Our good works will then be seen with all their concomitant imperfections; our Confessions, our Communions, will be to us a subject of dread and apprehension; but let us trust in God, who will never forsake them who put their trust in Him: let it be our care now, by a frequent contemplation on death, which must inevitably take place in regard of us all, though we know not when, to wean our affections from the vanities of this life, which is so intimately connected with death that the cradle and the grave are not the breadth of a span removed

asunder. Life and death may be considered as standing together with united hands, bargaining, as it were, for poor mortals.

Let us, then, while the God that gave us being still allows time and opportunity, let us adopt the wise determination to give up the pursuit of vanity; to turn from fancied enjoyments and delusive gratifications, which, when possessed, will disappoint us, and only prove to us that nothing that perishes can give happiness; that *all is vanity,* except loving God, and serving Him alone. Let us give ourselves, then, wholly to His love and service. Yes; great God of ineffable tenderness and charity! we will repose on thy loving mercy; we will obey thy word. We will *not fear,* but we *will believe.* All that we can do in life shall, by thy holy grace, be done, and for the rest we will trust in thee. May we, in the hour of death, be neither agitated by fears and doubts, as to what is passed, nor troubled with a distressing anxiety for the future! but may we, kind Creator, resign ourselves to humble confidence in thy mercies and the infinite merits of our divine Redeemer! May we believe, without doubting, all that thou hast taught—may we die true to thy holy faith! in the faith which thou hast given us; in the faith of that Church which thou hast founded, and commanded all to hear. Never let us, with daring presumption, arrogate to ourselves the ability and the right to form or reform a system of belief: what thou hast revealed, that let us hold and maintain, nor let us ever give to human wisdom that credence which thou hast reserved to thy Church, promising that the "Spirit of truth shall abide with it forever" (John xiv, 16). But, O God, "not every one who saith to thee, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he only who doeth the will of thy Father." Let us, then, not only believe what thou teachest, but let us practise what thou enjoinest; let us "hear the word of God, and keep it." Strengthen our weakness, O God, and support us in the hour of temptation. Without thy divine aid, there is nothing good in man. Preserve us, therefore, nor cease, O Lord, to "help thy servants whom thou hast redeemed with thy precious blood. Keep us without sin," and as we hope in thee alone, "let us not be confounded forever," but conducted through life into the glory of thy heavenly kingdom!

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ON INDIFFERENCE IN THE AFFAIR OF SALVATION

"As lightning cometh out of the east, and appeareth even in the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."—Matt. xxiv, 17.

SYNOPSIS.—The prediction of the destruction of Jerusalem. Its fulfilment. The day of death approaches for all. How indifferent are we to it. Causes of this indifference, first, the example of those around us, yet no security in numbers; second, lack of faith induced by sin; third, a presumptuous hope that while others are caught we will surely escape—a hope without foundation. Men deluded by false feeling of the remoteness of death. We grow accustomed to the presence of death, and hence fail to profit by it. Are we ready to be judged within an hour? Prepare, watch, correct, etc.

In this Gospel we read the prediction of our Saviour concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and of the signs and horrors that shall precede the dissolution of the globe which we inhabit. With respect to the ruin of the capital of Judea, the prediction has been literally verified. Forty years had not elapsed when the Roman general, Titus, invested the city, which was then filled with an immense multitude, whom the solemnity of the Passover had assembled from all parts. Reduced to the utmost extremity, their obstinacy seemed to increase in proportion as their resources diminished; and though pillage and murder and famine conspired to open the eyes of this miserable people, while internal factions preyed upon them, yet were they blind to their fate, and rejected every proposal. Inconceivable are the miseries to which they were reduced. Nightly murders were perpetrated without number; and at last noon-day slaughter paraded the streets with impunity, till the sight of blood lost all its horror, and murder became a pastime! At the same time such was the unparalleled pressure of famine that every noxious herb and nauseous thing was ravenously seized for aliment; the mother was reduced to the unnatural necessity of feeding on her own child; and even the graves were plundered, and the putrified carcasses of the dead made food for the dying! At length this impregnable city was taken; the triple wall was forced, and the town given up to the fury of an enraged army. The Temple, too, notwithstanding every precaution used by the general to preserve

this wonder of the world, was consumed in a manner which demonstrated the interposition of a divine power.

The prediction of Our Lord was accomplished to the letter! the Jews perished in heaps by the sword of the enemy, and they who escaped death were made captives, sold, and scattered through all the provinces of the Roman empire. Jerusalem was trampled under foot by the Gentiles, its soil is inhabited by strangers, who shall remain in possession of this once distinguished country as long as the Lord shall abandon His ancient inheritance to the profanation of ignorance and barbarism. The abomination which caused the desolation of Jerusalem will also effect the destruction of the whole earth, and with unerring certainty will be fulfilled all that the Son of God has foretold concerning that event. The day of the Lord is near at hand, and if the last day of the world be still at some distance from us, yet is the last day to *each of us,* the day of our *death,* very near to us all. And yet how indifferent do we appear! how unconcerned; busying ourselves each day with the concerns of this world; busying ourselves about future pleasures, and distant enjoyments, as if this life were never to have an end; or that a certain number of years were engaged or insured to us; whereas we are not sure of a single day, or even a single hour! Let us look into the causes of this fatal indifference; and let us, when we discover the origin of our folly, use every means to subdue it.

The first cause of our inattention to the great day of importance, and to the eternity of bliss or misery, that is to ensue, is the example of those about us. The argument of encouragement, which is drawn from the immense number who are in a situation exactly similar to our own, is found to have great weight in dispelling fear and stifling the admonitions of religion and conscience. Men persuade themselves they have nothing to fear, because all have the same reason as themselves. They do only what the bulk of mankind are accustomed to do; others proceed without concern who have, at least, as much reason to be alarmed as themselves. To strengthen their confidence, they are wont to say: "Surely Almighty God will not condemn to eternal misery the whole world; or, if there be a few who are more particular than the rest, there are so very many who live as we do, certainly we shall not all be lost!" My brethren, if the immense, omnipotent, eternal God, like the kings of the earth, had any need of us to maintain or augment His power or happiness, then indeed some reliance might be placed on num-

bers. But as He has nothing to fear from the united force of those creatures, who have all their force from Him, and whom the same Will which made them could annihilate, so shall not the multitude of sinners arrest or divert the course of His justice. As in the days of Noe, the numbers of those who sinned, instead of disarming God's vengeance, accelerated the effects of His indignation; as the numbers of sinners among the Jews did not avert the divine wrath, but hastened to fill up the measure of their iniquities, so shall not the multitude of guilty men in our days delay the anger of God or alleviate the severity of His sentence, but inflame His indignation and increase the rigor of His justice. He has assured us that though "many are called, yet few are chosen" (Matt. xx, 16); He has declared "that wide is the gate, and broad the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat" (Ibid. c. vii, 13): yet "how narrow is the gate, and strait the way, that leadeth to life, and few there are that find it" (v. 14). The love of present enjoyment serves also to stifle every thought of future account and future responsibility. Yes; this life is thought to have its pleasures; its amusements, its varieties, afford a certain satisfaction, and men surrender their hearts to its seducing charms, without attending to what they forfeit by their present inconsiderateness. They begin to wish it were to last forever; and, as in general, it is not difficult to make our understandings the dupes of our hearts by believing what we wish; if the vain, the frivolous, the idle, the dissipated of each sex can not *completely persuade* themselves that life will have no end, they try as much as possible to cherish the illusion by banishing whatever might tend to dispel it, or disturb them in the enjoyment of the present; and finally they resolve to banish all concern upon that subject, and whatever may be the case, they live as if they were to live forever. O Christians, you know that you are practising a ruinous deception to your own souls! You know that God is not influenced by our illusions or desires; that "as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage, even till that day in which Noe entered into the ark; and they knew not, till the flood came, and took them all away; so also shall the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matt. xxiv, 38). Yes; what happened in the days of Noe shall happen at the last day. Mankind will be engaged in the same vain, unprofitable and sinful pursuits which then engaged and still engage their minds and hearts, when another deluge, but not of water, a deluge

of fire, shall suddenly come and sweep them away from the face of the earth, to appear before God's tremendous majesty. Another cause of indifference in Christians is the decay, and, at length, the total extinction of faith. Yes; sin gradually diminishes divine faith, and, in the end, extinguishes it. At first, and for a certain time, sin occasions uneasiness and remorse. This is found a bitter ingredient in the cup of pleasure—a great drawback in the enjoyment of sensual gratifications. To do away with the reproach of conscience as much as possible some are so impious as to contemn the menaces of God and laugh at His rewards; and when the importunate conviction of a Supreme Being can not be entirely obliterated, they erect an idol of their own, they represent to themselves a Deity insensible, or indifferent, to good and evil; who, after giving us existence, ceases to regard our conduct or to concern Himself about His creatures. But these blasphemies, engendered in the filth of a corrupted heart, change not the nature of God, and only serve to accelerate His vengeance. In these days of immorality and impiety they who have not gone so far as to reject all revealed religion, but whose lives will not stand the test of truth, affect a species of liberality, a kind of compassion for man's frailty, which is no more than a palliative for their own guilt; they will pretend to consider the well-meaning man, as they are pleased to call him, whatever be his creed, as the most agreeable to the Deity.

This system, which is in direct contradiction to the spirit of truth, which has declared that "there is but one Lord, one faith, one baptism," as there is but "one God and Father of all" (Eph. iv, 5); that "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. xi, 6); that "he who believeth not shall be condemned" (Mark xvi, 16). This system of toleration and indifference, set up by man to favor vice and incredulity, while it is lenient to every novelty, is sure to decry the true faith, the faith of the only, holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, because this Church, unalterably the same, has at all times opposed vice without composition or connivance. This false liberality of sentiment, which opens the gates of heaven to sectaries of all descriptions, is daily gaining ground; as if at the command of men, or their united suffrage, the decrees of God could be altered, and the Deity could be made to patronize alike truth and falsehood, His own revealed doctrines, and the delirious effusions of impostors, fanatics, and madmen. Guard against these latitudinarian principles, my brethren, for if once you begin to entertain them, you will cease

to respect your own religion, and the revelation of God, communicated to you by the Church established by His only Son, and enlightened by His Holy Spirit; in a word, you will cease to believe with divine faith upon the authority of God, and religion will be no more than an ingenious system, its code of laws a prudent regulation for the present well-being and orderly conduct of its members. These dispositions are the evident signs of irreligion and incredulity; and in proportion as they become more generally prevalent, are the forerunners of the divine vengeance: for when a hatred and contempt of religion have arrived at a certain point then the anger of God breaks forth, and His menaces are realized by effects. It was this which brought the deluge upon the earth, this which drew down the wrath of heaven upon Jerusalem, and this full growth of iniquity will, at length, draw down ruin and destruction on our sinful world.

My friends, let the fear of the Lord be forcibly impressed upon our hearts, let us cherish it within us, by recollection and mental prayer, nor let us sacrifice it to any consideration. As long as it continues to live in our souls we shall be preserved from offending God, we shall be preserved by it in innocence and piety, and at the last day it will be found our best defense.

Again, men are led away to vanity and forgetfulness of God's law by a most absurd presumption, which makes them except themselves from the dangers which they are surprised to see so little regarded by others. They observe that among those of their own age and condition, though many are carried off by death, yet several escape: they hear or witness accidents which are fatal to those whom they befall; they hear continually of persons snatched out of this world by sudden death, or after a few days' illness; but they seem to assume confidence from the misfortunes of others, and each seems to persuade himself he is more secure from the calamity of those who, in all human appearance, were as remote from danger as himself. Oh, what pains do men take to deceive themselves! He whom you lately beheld expire, or whose shocking death gave you so much alarm, on hearing it described, had, like you, formed an ideal exception for himself, and fancied himself secure; he felt himself encouraged, like you, with all the freshness of health and youthful vigor; nevertheless, he was struck by that invisible hand which, you know, will some time or other level you with the dead of past ages; he was struck—and now is his fate, of never-ending

happiness, or perhaps of eternal despair, decided. On what, then, do you presumptuously rely? May not you be carried off in the twinkling of an eye? And how do your accounts stand with God? Could you, at this moment, present yourselves at the bar of unerring justice, and dare to stand your trial? Oh, if you knew that in the space of one-half hour you were to be summoned before your Judge; ah! you would dismiss from your minds all those projects of vanity, sensuality, revenge and ambition which you now indulge; a cold horror would chill your blood, and how would you wish for the power to do that which you might now do if you would? Fear, then, and fear for yourselves; and while you have it in your power, set about that business which is paramount to every other, nor have to lament, with ineffectual grief, at the hour of death, that you have put it off till the night has come, and put an end to the power of working. This fear can not but be salutary, while presumptuous security must be your ruin.

What delusive arguments do men use to deceive themselves! If any one of their acquaintances die, immediately are the causes of his death conjectured and descanted on, and they persuade themselves that they are wholly secure from similar danger. It was excess of fatigue, it was irregular diet, intemperance, an imprudent exposure of the body to a damp air, or the coldness of the season; whatever is presumed to have occasioned death, the conclusion is instantly formed: I will be cautious to avoid the like danger, and I shall be safe. He had such a complaint, which I have not; he had a constitutional predisposition to such a disorder; this, I thank God, is not my case. He was in years, it is true, and nearly of the same age as myself; but how many arrive at a more advanced period of life? I will, therefore, make myself easy. Oh! if you have not the same complaint of which your neighbor died, have you not others? Most probably you have some ailment of which you are at present ignorant. When health appears the firmest, perhaps your blood is on the point of freezing in your veins; your heart about to discontinue its wonted pulsations. Prudence can not guard you against accidents unforseen, against dangers directed by Providence to end your life: be prepared by ever living in the love and fear of God, to obey His call; desire to be united to Him, for whoever loves this world is an enemy of God.

How many are there who endeavor to make themselves easy respecting death by a misapplication of that experience which ought

rather to make them more cautious! The first whom they saw stretched out in the coffin struck them with dread and consternation; but having now seen so many, they are without apprehension. On seeing the corpse of a stranger let down into the grave, a melancholy sadness oppressed their heart, and the silent tear stole down their cheek; but now they can contemplate the descent of the coffin and can hear the rumbling of the cords without emotion! Alas! the more of our friends we survive, the nearer do we draw to our own dissolution! Make not, then, that experience which was designed for your profit, wholly useless by labored insensibility; make not your remedy your poison. Let not the mercy of God, which should inspire you with unceasing gratitude, serve to remove you from Him, and fill the measure of your ingratitude. Many have been snatched away while you have been spared: but has it been your desert that has procured exemption for you? Where would you now be if God, instead of those whom you have outlived, had called you? at such a period of life? after the commission of such a sin, in the practise of such a habit? Oh, had you been snatched in such an evil hour, were you to be hurried off at this moment, what would be the consequence for all eternity?

Oh, my beloved, take example, fear, be converted, be assiduous in prayer, and every virtuous exercise. "Watch; because at what hour you know not, the Son of Man will come" (Matt. xxiv, 44). Instead of indulging an idle curiosity concerning the time of your death, let all your endeavors be directed toward your last hour; correct the faults and errors of your past life, reform every evil practise; expiate by tears, by alms, by mortification, your past sins; break from this world, and aspire toward heaven; seek in the holy Sacraments, and a frequent intercourse with God, spiritual strength and consolation; no longer place your hearts on these empty toys, which now enslave them, but abandon yourselves wholly to God, that when He comes to visit you He may find you watching, and take you to the joys of His kingdom.

252.1
W 586

10057

WHITE, THOS

AUTHOR

Sermons for the Sundays, etc.

TITLE

DATE LOANED	BORROWER'S NAME
	Grover
	Stout
	STORAGE

10057